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New Statesman

CABINET RULES Part Two

21 February 1986 80p IR£1.28 US$1.50 By Air

ANIMAL RIGHTS

THE NEW POLITICS?

DAVID EDGAR: Thatcher's lust for revenge

SARA MAITLAND: Who's afraid of Marilyn French?

ANDY McSMITH: Gorbachev puts his house in order

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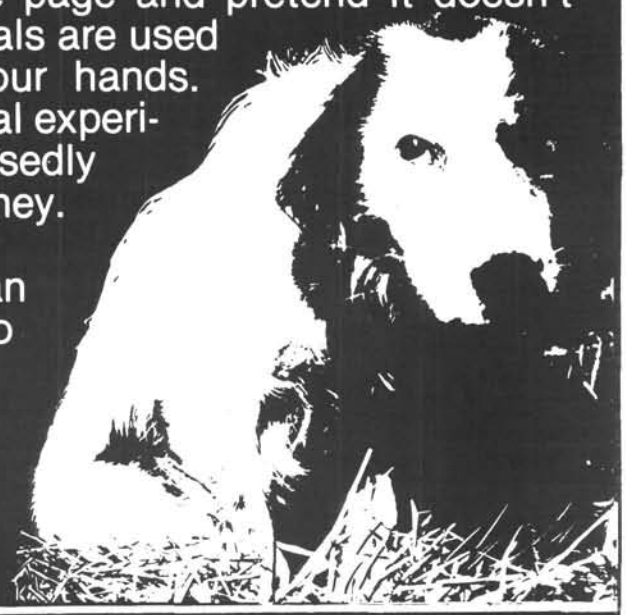

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New Statesman

Cover drawing: Will Hill

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Four short stories by JAMES KELMAN

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GETTING AWAY FROM DADDY
PAUL ROAZEN traces the independent tradition of British psychoanalysis

New Statesman

Vol 111 No 2865 21 February 1986

More signs of decline in the company sector

THE CURRENT rash of takeover bids hitting the City —Rank's for Granada is only the latest in a frenzy of fashion that is convulsing British boardrooms — is a by-product of the state to which British industry has been reduced by seven years of uncertainty caused by Thatcherite economic policies.

With wild swings in the exchange rate and real interest rates sustained at levels never before seen in this century, British industry has been quite unable to plan steadily for organic growth. Instead managements are being forced to look for growth and extra profit by buying up their rivals. These acts of industrial cannibalism may advantage some shareholders, though on past form most will not. The represent a sick spasm by an unhealthy economy.

Now the BL row, coming so soon after Westland, is showing up the whole of the government's industrial policy as a shambles. The Prime Minister's instinctive preference is to do deals with dominant American partners (Sikorsky, General Motors, Ian MacGregor) in order to solve intractable British problems.

From a very narrow point of view, a coherent argument can be constructed for such a policy, though it would be more honest of the government to say what it was doing rather than to proceed in such an underhand way. Weak British companies, trying to compete in world markets on the basis of inadequate market share, inadequate managements and inadequate finance might indeed be well advised in the short run to do the best deal they can with a world leader in their industry. And, to be honest, some of the chauvinist opposition to particular deals with particular Americans is pretty synthetic. As citizens we have been happy enough to drive Ford Cortinas and Vauxhalls, clean our carpets with Hoovers, spoil our teeth with Mars bars, do our sewing on Singer sewing machines — all products of American-owned companies — without feeling that somehow the essence of the British way of life was being undermined.

This narrow analysis, however, fails to address itself to the fundamental changes that have been happening to international industry over the past two decades. When General Motors bought Vauxhall, or when Ford set up in this country, their UK operations were, in almost all practical respects, British companies. With the integration of industrial management that has been taking place at an accelerating pace since the war, this is today no longer the case. Ford (UK) is now no more than a metal bashing, assembly and sales operation, producing vehicles whose design, production schedules, sources of components and price are decided elsewhere — in this case by Ford of Europe, which reports directly and in detail to Dearborn, Michigan. The inevitable result of such a change in relationships is that, at moments of critical decision, the domestic interests of the parent company exercise an unacceptable priority over an important part of British industry, as against the interests of the British workforce, shareholders (if there are any) and national interest.

The entire industrial world is moving in the direction of greater protectionism. The United States is particularly ruthless and effective at twisting arms for free trade so long as it suits its national industrial interests, but then turning on a burst of targeted protectionism, usually with the argument that it is no longer possible to resist Congressional pressure. In this new world the only long-term hope for old companies like BL and for new companies,

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On the right lines.

BR now has a code of practice to help customers with everyday travel problems.

It tells you, for example, how to get refunds on tickets and seasons, and how to make claims for compensation and independent arbitration.

A related Guide to Customer Service sets out the standards BR expects to achieve. For example, at least 90% of London and South East trains are to arrive within 5 minutes of specified times. And, BR aims to answer your telephone enquiries within 30 seconds. The Code of Practice is available at all stations.

Luxury on rails.

BR/InterCity has re-introduced the famous Pullman train. Some 22 luxury coaches have already been built – providing at-seat service and that famous quiet, smooth ride. They have already replaced normal First Class on 24 trains every weekday between Euston and Manchester and Liverpool, and between King's Cross and West Yorkshire and the North East.

The fares are very competitive with domestic airlines. The first class ticket on the London to Manchester run works out at £76 compared with BA's peak time Shuttle fare of £108. And, as anyone knows who's used both, you get far more elbow room and privacy on the train.

We're getting there.

such as those engaged in micro-electronics or bio-technology, is to use the marketing base that Europe provides in order to have the strength to be viable in an industrial world currently dominated by the United States and Japan.

But a European industrial base alone is not enough. There must be an end to the combination of government industrial policies that vacillate between indifference and unhelpful intervention and of financial institutions whose time horizon for investment is only a year or two. Until a more constructive approach is applied steadily to industrial policy over a long period nothing fundamental will change and our less and less genteel industrial decline will continue. □

This isn't the rape law change we need

THERE IS NO great issue of civil liberties at stake in the proposal to change the law which prevents the press naming a man who has been charged with rape. There *is* an important issue of press freedom and press responsibility in reporting rape trials. The ban on the press naming a defendant was not introduced in the 1976 Sexual Offences Amendment Act in order to help the defendant; rather, it was to 'equalise' the press treatment of both victim and defendant.

There was no strong argument for doing this, for the clause preventing the victim being named was introduced precisely because it was recognised that the victim of rape is a special case. Following the Heilbron report on rape, it was widely accepted that, almost alone in criminal cases, the character and conduct of the victim was put on trial. (Almost alone, because in murder trials too the defence counsel will argue that the victim's conduct and character was a cause of his or her own death; but as the victim is dead, she or he cannot, in law, be defamed.)

Since 1976, some small progress has been made in shifting public attitudes towards rape, towards getting public, police and the judiciary to recognise that rape is a peculiarly cruel form of assault which no woman, whether prostitute or virgin, 'asks for'. The fear of some MPs that to drop the anonymity clause for men will reverse this progress seems groundless.

If the law is reformed, however, it should not be because it currently hampers police work. This myth has sprung up because Wiltshire police claimed they could not publish the photo or name of a man whom they suspected of rape last May. The suspect went on to rape a second woman, and he was eventually caught and convicted. In fact, the law clearly specifies that a man cannot be named once he has been charged or named in court. Until then, press and police are as free to publish photos, photofits and names as they are when trying to catch any other suspect criminal.

If the Home Office does amend the law preserving a man's anonymity there should be one exception: the naming of a man accused of raping a relative. (In fact, the most important legal reform in rape which the Home Office should be instituting is a law outlawing rape in marriage). It is believed that anonymity for the victim has encouraged more women to report rape — believed because it is never possible to know for certain what is an increase in reporting and what is an increase in the incidence of rape. If the rapist is a member of the family and his name is published, women are going to be extremely reluctant to risk a trial in which it will be obvious who she is.

What no change in the law can do is prevent a defence counsel from arguing that a woman 'invited' rape, nor prevent the press gleefully adding their own physical description of the woman to dramatised accounts of the defence case. Only continued pressure on newspaper editors, and on the Press Council, to allow a woman witness to preserve her dignity can help chip away at the prejudices which shape accounts of rape trials. □

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SDP activists lash leader in reselection battle

THE LABOUR PARTY wilfully refuses to misbehave over the reselection of parliamentary candidates — despite the best efforts of the media. Meanwhile, unreported, the Liberals and the SDP do their best to tear themselves apart — in Mansfield, for example, where the breakaway miners' union offered the SDP a golden opportunity at Labour's expense.

SDP councillors Stephen and Christine Taylor have resigned from the party in disgust at the 'undemocratic' way they say they've been treated by national SDP headquarters. They are now sitting as Independents on Mansfield district council.

The row blew up over allowing Liberals to take part in the selection of an SDP candidate for the Nottinghamshire mining constituency. What's more, in nearby Newark members of both parties will be allowed to select a candidate of either party, giving the more numerous Liberals the advantage — and it too was exclusive SDP territory last time.

In the 1983 election Stephen Taylor fought Mansfield for the SDP, and Liberal Association secretary Jill Usher was his agent. He came third. Mansfield was quite happy with Mr Taylor, and the Liberals agreed that he should be the candidate at the next election.

Cosy unity was shattered when the SDP's Cowley Street HQ in London rejected the arrangement, saying the national carve-up of seats hadn't been decided. Meanwhile, the emergence of Liberal young blood — aggressively hostile to the SDP — broke up the Usher-Taylor alliance.

The Ushers — Jill, husband and ex-councillor Peter, son David and daughter-in-law Karen — all resigned from the Liberal Party in 1984. Peter says he will vote for Labour MP Don Concannon rather than the SDP candidate at the next election. He's fed up with the bickering and ambition of local Alliance politics.

The Davids step in

The Taylors' resignation came two months ago, after a letter from David Owen and David Steel made it clear that Liberals would be allowed to vote in 'their' parliamentary selection. The SDP only have 35 members, while the Liberals claim 140. Mrs Taylor says with withering scorn: 'It's a bottletop membership — my gardener's a Liberal; he's unemployed and I know he hasn't paid, but he's got a fully paid-up card.'

Although the leader of the breakaway Union of Democratic Mineworkers, Roy Lynk, attended a local SDP meeting in nearby Sutton-in-Ashfield in December, the Alliance has failed to make any headway among 'moderate' miners. Labour MP Don Concannon has successfully retained the loyalty of both UDM and NUM members, and is widely regarded as a good constituency MP. The Taylors, who had been Labour supporters until Mr Taylor entered politics as an SDP councillor in a 1982 by-election, seem to have interest in the politics of the coalfields, and were 'relieved' to get through the strike without being asked about their loyalties.

Meanwhile, in choosing a candidate for the Fulham by-election in London the SDP also got tangled in an internal dispute, while Labour's Nick Raynsford had already been selected and was working to win the seat. And the Conservatives are no better. Not many people know this, but between 1945 and 1979 (when Labour brought in compulsory reselection) the Tories 'deselected' more sitting MPs than Labour.

John Rentoul

MORE SPLITS, SCHISMS AND FUSIONS FROM THE WRP(s)

ONCE THE MOST authoritarian and disciplined of Britain's Trotsykist parties, the Workers' Revolutionary Party now seems to have entered a period of convulsive schisms. MARTIN BRESNIHAN reports

JUST FOUR months after parting company with its former guru Gerry Healy, for years the gravitational centre of the party, the old WRP (WRP1, so to speak), has split again. Only 20 defectors have broken away but they dominate the youth section and have links in the United States, West Germany and Australia.

Back in the breakaway WRP (WRP2), set up with nearly 100 of Healy's supporters after he was expelled for — amongst other charges — sexual abuse of women members, the 74-year-old Healy has been dropped from its central committee after a two-to-one vote at its national conference. He's been replaced by Sheila Torrance, his deputy for 20 years and he now only has around 25 supporters, including Vanessa and Corin Redgrave.

Splits in Trotskyist organisations usually erupt as arcane disputes over Trotskyism itself. In the case of WRP1 the dispute is over the decision to re-evaluate the entire history of Trotskyism. For the breakaway members, led by David Hyland, this is heresy.

And so thinks the International Committee of the Fourth International, a descendant of the organisation set up by Trotsky in 1938 to replace the Stalin-dominated Third International. ICFI, like a political multinational, hands out franchises to national Trotskyist groups, and has decided to award Hyland with the British franchise.

The leader of the ICFI since the purge of Healy is David North of the US Workers' League. To his horror, the WRP1 is having doubts about the ten year campaign to brand the entire leadership of the rival Socialist Workers' Party as agents of the CIA, the KGB, or both.

However, North does approve of WRP1's decision to tolerate criticism of various Middle East regimes and to abandon its call for a General Strike to replace 'Bonapartist' Thatcher with a Workers' Revolutionary Government.

But after schism comes fusion, and WRP1 may link up with the Socialist Viewpoint group led by Alan Thornett, the former BL Cowley shop steward expelled from the pre-divided WRP with more than 100 supporters 12 years ago. Thornett is also discussing unity with a group which split from the Socialist League (formerly IMG) last year, and which is enthusiastic about the proposed re-examination of the history of Trotskyism.

Down from the pure air of political theory, Mike Banda of WRP1 is fighting no fewer than 19 legal actions brought by the Healy camp (WRP2 or possibly 2a). At stake are publishing rights and assets valued at more than £1 million, including the printing plant, a residential college in the Peak District, six bookshops and the party's London headquarters.

The Healy group has managed to finance its legal onslaught while resuming daily publication of *Newsline*. ●

Sean McKernan

The Divis flats in West Belfast — 'the worst housing in Europe', according to some architects and planners. Last week an exhibition on Divis opened at the Tricycle theatre, Kilburn —and was boycotted by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The NIHE has rejected requests from 97 per cent of the 2,500 residents to demolish the flats. Instead it has put forward plans to refurbish them, an idea one senior member of the Town and County Planning Association describes as 'perverted planning logic'. Divis is rather worse than normal inner city 1960s housing. Remote control cameras watch the flats 24 hours a day, the roof of a 19 storey tower is used as an army observation post and helicopter pad, and 33 residents have been shot during 15 years of warfare. The flats are infested with rats, cockroaches, mould, and fungus, and those that have been demolished have revealed a massive asbestos problem.

Gillian Loughran

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ANGRY WHITES ARE NEWS, ANGRY BLACKS AREN'T

THE TABLOIDS had themselves a ball with the Liverpool 'School of Race Hate' story last week. IAN WILLIAMS takes a deep breath and gives the background to the real story

A PUPIL is told off for drawing Greenland larger than Africa. A black pupil taking assembly asks for a minute's silence on the morning on which Benjamin Moloise of the ANC is hanged. Reggae is played at school discos and teachers write on chalk boards.

By the time the *Sun* got its grubby mitts on the story last week, the Wapping lie factory had transmuted this into a reign of multi-cultural terror in Liverpool's University comprehensive, leading to white pupils deserting the school. 'University', formerly Paddington, is the only purpose-built comprehensive in the city and its catchment area had been the inner city where most of Liverpool's blacks live. For many years Liverpool prided itself on the absence of racism in the city — but this had more to do with the absence of blacks from most areas of the town. Racism there was and is.

To form the new school, a single sex selective school with a city wide intake — the Liverpool Institute — was merged with the former comprehensive bringing together people from widely differing racial and social backgrounds. It is a group of sixth formers from the Institute who have been making the complaints.

Liverpool education heads seem to be bending with the populist wind, saying that the anti-racist policy needs slowing down to avoid this kind of backlash. But the evidence points the other way. It would be difficult to go any slower with the race code of practice for the city schools which after two years still hasn't been issued. It's now further complicated by the dispute over Militant Sampson Bond's appointment as race relations adviser. Equally tardily, the multi-racial education unit is still unopened after a year even though the DES has agreed funding for ten posts. And in contrast to the widely advertised flow of pupils away from the school there is a disturbing queue to get into it — from black pupils claiming harassment in other schools. One of them had been shot with an air weapon at another Liverpool school. But this was no more news for Murdoch than the numerous other unreported racial assaults across the country which have been relegated to the 'dog bites man' spike. ●

Martin Meyer/Network

Last Wednesday evening *NS* editor Hugh Stephenson met a group of MPs outside the House of Commons to hand over advance copies of our first extracts from the Cabinet's secret rule book. Clive Ponting, who's writing a running commentary on the extracts (see page 13) went with him. Our picture shows (l to r) Clive Ponting and Hugh Stephenson with Austin Mitchell (Lab), Archy Kirkwood and Paddy Ashdown (Lib) and Robin Squire (Con). They all said publicly that the document should be published in full. Questions have been put down in Parliament asking whether, in view of the *NS*'s publication, the document will now be declassified and whether, in view of such a flagrant breach of the Official Secrets Act, the government will now prosecute the *NS*. As we went to press the answers had not been published. Watch this space.

Overseas aid: to them that hath shall be given

LATEST FIGURES from the OECD, the club of rich nations, reveal a massive up-swing in financial flows to the better-off developing countries. So-called middle income countries, such as Brazil or Singapore, have received far more aid and investment than the very poorest countries.

In 1984 (the latest year for which complete figures are available) India received only three quarters of the cash allocated to Malaysia, for example, though it has 50 times the population. Tolerably well off Egypt netted $2,997 million compared with starving Ethiopia which had to make do with $243 million.

The Development Assistance Committee of the OECD in Paris has just published its report on exactly where all the aid, except credits and bank loans from its member countries, have ended up in recent years. DAC members include the United States, Japan, Britain and other western European nations.

According to the DAC, financial flows of all kinds to the better-off in the Third World jumped by 65 per cent between 1983 and 1984 to reach $35.5 billion. By contrast aid and investment to the least developed of Third World nations rose by a tiny 6 per cent and even then hit only $3.7 billion.

The trend has been caused in part by a slight easing in the $900 billion Third World debt crisis in 1984. Bankers in the City of London and on Wall Street were forced to increase their lending in order to prevent some of the bigger borrowers defaulting.

But the position may be even more worrying that the DAC report suggests. The International Monetary Fund's statistics for the same year show a total net flow of $34 billion from developing countries to industrial nations. The IMF in Washington predicts this 'aid' from the poor to the rich could be as much as $41 billion by 1986.

The discrepancy between the DAC and IMF views is accounted for by what the DAC includes in its calculations. Profits made by a U.S. company in Chile, for example, and then re-invested are counted as a new cash flow by the DAC. Similarly rescheduling Third World debts only involves a theoretical transfer of new cash from the banks.

John Tanner

IBA gets an overdue earful from lesbians and gays

CLARE MULHOLLAND, deputy director (television) of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), has promised that 'close study' will be made of research alleging 'gross professional negligence' in British television and radio's entertainment and 'actuality' representations of lesbians and gay men.

Speaking at a conference in London last Friday (14 February) before an audience of broadcasting professionals, press and 'out' lesbians and gays, she came under intense cross-examination about the basis of the 'public decency' standards which it is the IBA's statutory obligation to enforce on commercial broadcasting networks.

The urgency of the questioning, which focused particularly on the IBA ban on Public Information Service (PIS) television ads by the lesbian and/or gay voluntary sector, derived from the overtly anti-homosexual nature of the present parliamentary attempt to extend the Obscene Publications Act of 1959 to TV and radio (*NS* 13 December 1985).

Mulholland was only one, however, of the distinguished figures from broadcasting to attend the most important yet encounter between some of those who control programming and one of its most ignored and/or 'stereotyped' constituencies. Professor Stuart Hall of the Open University and Paul Bonner, controller of programmes Channel 4, spoke — Bonner coming in for close questioning about C4's failure, despite its remit to meet needs ignored by the other TV companies, to open to any regular slot for the homosexual populations.

The BBC was informally represented in force, with employees from TV Schools, *Contact Wales*, Documentaries, the *Jimmy Young Programme*, *Start the Week*, and local radio, but was shunned by all senior controllers despite invitations.

Also from the BBC came last Friday's conference chair, Nick Ross, presenter of *Breakfast Time*. A reporter from the *Sun* demanded to know whether Ross is gay: 'I am not', he said, 'But if there is anything I can do to bring about action on this matter, I am ready to help'. The *Sun* subsequently published a brief and unprejudicial account of the proceedings.

Liberal press guilty too

Reporters from the *Daily Telegraph* and *Guardian* were also present. This correspondent, speaking as News Editor of the *New Statesman*, mentioned that it is difficult to disentangle the effective homophobia of the broadcasting institutions from the 'shut-out' of openly lesbian or gay journalism by the 'quality' papers including the liberal ones, the *Guardian* and *Observer*. Confirmation was immediate. No report has yet appeared in either paper (even in the *Guardian* media page) about Friday's debate.

The conference was organised by Gays & Broadcasting as a venture of the GLC-funded London Media Project. Copies of *Are We Being Served?*, an analysis of the 'entertainment' and 'actuality' content of relevance to homosexuals in 290 hours of radio and 180 hours of TV last August, are already in short supply but a booklet version is to be made available soon from LMP, 237 Pentonville Road, London N1 9NJ, or phone 01 278 6601.

Andrew Lumsden

A public meeting on Homosexuality & The Media *is to be held by Campaign for Press Broadcasting Freedom next Wednesday 26 February in London. Details: CPBF 01-437 2795.*

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Council results: Tories go from bad to worse

NOVEMBER's Conservative recovery collapsed even before the Westland crisis began to overwhelm the government. However, their subsequent disarray has clearly contributed to a disastrous electoral performance. In the eleven weeks since the last Council Scoreboard they lost three out of every four seats they were defending.

Altogether 64 by-elections took place between December and the middle of February; the gains-and-losses table is as follows:

	Seats defended	Seats lost	Seats gained	Seats held now
Con	32	24	1	9
Lab	17	6	4	15
Lib	6	1	15	20
SDP	1	0	11	12
Others	8	5	5	8

Forty-two of these contests were three-cornered. In these Wards 72,119 votes were cast:

Labour	18,250	25.3%
Conservative	20,209	28.0%
Liberal/SDP	30,535	42.3%
Others	3,125	4.3%

There were only marginal differences in voting pre- and post-Heseltine's resignation.

Labour's relatively poor performance is partly explained by the fact that only one in four contests were in Labour seats. However, a net loss of two seats when Conservative wards were falling like snow is hardly encouraging. Also, the loss of three out of five Labour seats in Scotland to the SNP does not augur well for the Regional Council elections in May.

The Alliance are clear beneficiaries of the collapse in Conservative fortunes in by-elections over this period. They gained 21 of the 24 Conservative losses. Whilst the opinion polls may be giving mixed messages nothing could be clearer than the verdict of ballot boxes throughout the country.

Unless the Conservatives manage to escape from their accumulating crises they face a very dire prospect in the May council elections throughout Britain. The losses they have sustained in recent months suggest that very few areas are safe from assault.

David Cowling

Council scoreboard

5 December

Lichfield DC	LAB GAIN (Con)
Blyth Valley DC	LIB GAIN (Lab)
Christchurch DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
New Forest DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Vale Royal DC	LIB GAIN (Lab)
E Cambridgeshire DC	SDP GAIN (Ind)
New Forest DC	SDP GAIN (Con)
Windsor & Maidenhead DC	SDP GAIN (Con)
Gwynedd CC	Plaid Cymru GAIN (Ind)
Boston DC	Lab hold
Corby DC	Lab hold
Sefton MDC	Lab hold
E Staffordshire DC	Con hold
Wycombe DC	Con hold
Chelmsford DC	Lib hold
Manchester city	Lib hold
Blyth Valley DC	SDP hold

12 December

Cumbria CC	CON GAIN (Ind)
Dacorum DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Harrogate DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Hinckley & Bosworth DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Vale of White Horse DC	SDP GAIN (Con)
S. Tyneside MDC	Lab hold
East Devon DC	Con hold

19 December

Oswestry DC	LAB GAIN (Ind)
West Lothian DC	SNP GAIN (Lab)
Bristol DC	Lab hold
Southwark LBC	Lab hold
West Lothian DC	Lab hold
Dover DC	Con hold

9 January

Liverpool city	SDP GAIN (Lab)
Motherwell DC	SNP GAIN (Lab)
Redditch	Lab hold
Knowsley DC	Lib hold

16 January

Oadby & Wigston DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Test Valley DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Aylesbury Vale DC	Lab hold

23 January

South Ribble DC	LAB GAIN (Con)
Pendle DC	LIB GAIN (Ind)
Northavon DC	SDP GAIN (Con)
Waverley DC	SDP GAIN (Con)
Boston DC	Con hold

30 January

Norfolk CC	LIB GAIN (Con)
N Yorkshire CC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Harborough DC	SDP GAIN (Con)
Kirkaldy DC	SNP GAIN (Lab)
Dundee DC	Con hold
Mansfield DC	Con Hold
Guilford DC	Alliance hold (SDP gain from Lib)
Malvern Hills	Ind hold
Oswestry DC	Ind hold

6 February

Rochford DC	LAB GAIN (Con)
West Wiltshire DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Hyndburn DC	SDP GAIN (Con)
Selby DC	SDP GAIN (Con)
Taunton Deane DC	SDP GAIN (Con)
Roxburgh DC	IND GAIN (Lib)
Coventry city	Lab hold
West Wiltshire DC	Lib hold
Epsom & Ewell DC	Ind hold

13 February

Avon CC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Charnwood DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Motherwell DC	Lab hold
Avon CC	Con hold

MISCELLANY

Whispering campaigns

Our old friend Bernard Ingham (see p.15) has been at his dirty tricks again. Last Thursday, the day our first extract from the Confidential 'Cabinet Practice' document appeared, he told the hacks at his — naturally unattributable — briefing to lobby correspondents that he couldn't understand why it had taken us so long to publish the documents, since Tony Benn had been hawking them around for so long — yet another and typical example of the way in which the lobby system can be used to slur people 'off the record'. Departing for once from our rigid policy of saying nothing at all about the source of our leaked documents, we can assure Ingham that it was not T. Benn, who in this matter has been acting with punctillious correctness, invoking his oath as a Privy Counsellor. Perhaps our Bernard would like to offer an apology — on or off the record.

No time for arguments

Neil Kinnock is evidently impressed by the NS's *disclosure of the document. He has been telling friends that he plans a major reform when he becomes Prime Minister. He'd scrap it, and replace it with a single rule: 'Anyone who puts a foot out of line gets it chopped off'.*

Tough talking

Socialism, as we all know, means strongly worded resolutions. Last week, for instance, a Commons motion calling on the government to expand the service provided by law centres was signed by a Tory wet, a Welsh nationalist, a Liberal and a Labour MP. Bob Clay, Joan Maynard and Harry Cohen of the hard left Campaign Group of MPs put down an amendment to insert the word 'immediately'. Among many others, an all-party motion against the selling-off of Land Rover to foreigners carries a similar Campaign amendment to insert 'and any other UK companies'. This has greatly advanced the cause of working people. It *is* good to see our elected representatives working so hard.

O tempora! O mores!

Most commentators thought it significant and interesting that Kenneth Clarke should criticise Rupert Murdoch in his speech at a Commons press lunch last week. The Guardian *and the* FT *both reported Clarke's remarks that 'Rupert Murdoch's personal public relations could do with a little improvement,' and his hope that the new generation of newspapers wouldn't have to be controlled by 'proprietors from the old Commonwealth.' How did* The Times, *as a newspaper of record, cover this public difference of opinion between Mrs Thatcher and one of her ministers? Answer: in the middle of a story about the sequestration of Sogat's assets, and in the following terms: 'Mr Kenneth Clarke . . . compared the print unions' actions to Custer's last stand and attacked them for their folly in defending restrictive practices, huge pay demands, old technology and overmanning in Fleet Street.' That's the way, Rupe: all the news that's fit to print, and all the news printed to fit.*

Not so difficult

'It will be difficult to dismiss this book — which is clearly the result of massive scholarship,' writes Edmund O'Sullivan, editor of *Middle East Economic Digest*, reviewing a new work on Saudi Arabia published by Harvard University Press. Attentive Miscellany readers will be able to surmount the difficulty, since the book is by none other than our old friend Nadav Safran, who was paid $107,430 by the CIA to write it (*NS* 18 October). Safran, an Israeli ex-paratrooper, so embarrassed his bosses, Harvard University, that he has been forced out of his job as director of their Middle East Studies Centre. He hangs onto his professorship while the university pursues enquiries into the financial sources he arranged for the Centre.

Writing on the wall

MI6 have a problem on their hands, or more precisely on the foot of their HQ, at Century House, a gloomy tower block (south of Waterloo station) to which they were banished in the 60's. While engrossed in the serious business of countering the KGB threat to our way of life as we know it, they have failed to notice the impact of a far more potent threat to world order: West Ham fans. Of course, D Notice No 6 forbids us to discuss details of the buildings where the intelligence services operate, but we can exclusively reveal that Century House now bears a tasteful fresco of aerosoled comments on the lines of: 'West Ham 1, Spurs 0'. We have however contacted the Foreign Office, nominal guardians of the building. A languid voice drawled: 'Well vandalism is such a problem for everyone.' (Even if they don't officially exist).

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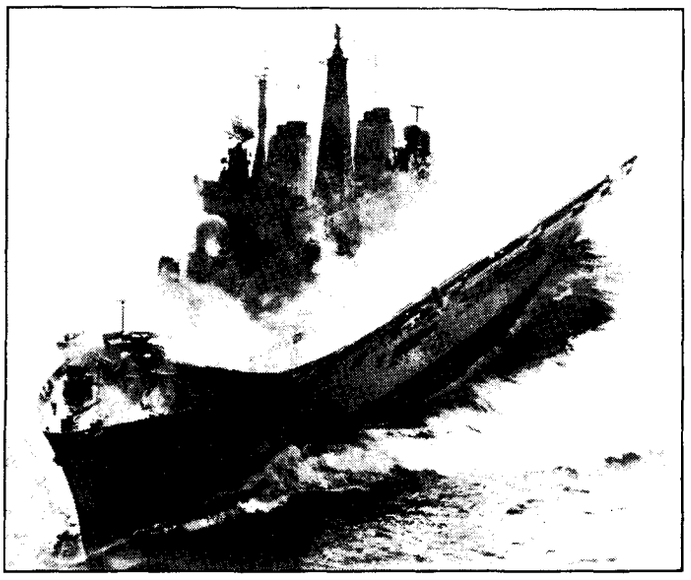
SCRUTINY

Duncan Campbell and Patrick Forbes



PA

HMS *Illustrious* on the attack. But is its target nuclear-free New Zealand, sacred islands of Hawaii, or the launch of a new 'NATO' in the Pacific?

WHAT'S THE ROYAL NAVY DOING IN THE PACIFIC?

THE largest Royal Navy force to go on exercise with the Americans in the Pacific Ocean for 10 years will pass through the Panama canal early in May. British government support for US military aims at the other end of the world has now taken priority over commitments to NATO

The government has just admitted that the first mission of the Royal Navy task force, to tour the Pacific and Indian oceans from 15 April until December, will be to take part in a large US Navy exercise. A second objective of the trip, codenamed 'Global 86', is to put pressure on New Zealand's anti-nuclear government.

The US Navy exercise, RIMPAC, is the tenth in a series, but it's the first time that any nation not on the Pacific 'rim' from which it takes its name has participated.

Questioned by Labour front-bencher George Foulkes earlier this month about plans for RIMPAC, the Defence Ministry claimed that 'the release of public information is a matter for the US Navy'.

Although information about British participation in RIMPAC was withheld until two weeks ago, full details of the British plan were leaked by Japanese Defence Ministry officials to the Tokyo newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* in October last year.

Asahi Shimbun reported that the US Navy had asked for British participation as a means of showing off a 'grand alliance against the Soviet Union' to lesser Pacific countries. The growing strength of nuclear free and pro-disarmament feelings in New Zealand and the islands of the South Pacific has fuelled the determination of some US strategists to create a formal Pacific alliance.

The US has steadily pushed Japan's so-called 'Maritime Self Defence Forces' into expanding and operating thousands of miles from the Japanese coast. RIMPAC will be joined this year by the largest-ever Japanese contingent of eight warships and a submarine.

RIMPAC's main scenario is the retaking of Hawaii, which has supposedly been occupied by hostile 'Orange' (ie, Soviet) forces. It is widely believed that this scenario is intended to mimic an attack on bases in the Soviet Kuril Islands and Kamchatka peninsula. Such a manoeuvre would enable the US Navy to penetrate the Soviet submarine sanctuary of the Sea of Okhotsk.

The 'retaking of Hawaii' plan has also provoked international protest because of plans to bomb and shell Kaho'olawe, a Hawiian island with a proliferation of historic sites. The island, now used by the US Navy as gunnery and bombing range, is a sacred site to native Hawaians.

New Zealanders now fear that, after RIMPAC, there may be a provocative request by Britain for a visit to New Zealand ports by the ships of Global 86. Even if the Royal Navy avoids New Zealand, it is likely to attempt to isolate Prime Minister David Lange's anti-nuclear stance by visiting as many other South Pacific ports as possible.

Concern in New Zealand about Global 86 coincides with the visit there this week of the British Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse.

The seven ships involved in Global 86 are HMS *Illustrious,* the new aircraft carrier, a destroyer, two frigates and three support ships. During the eight-month trip, they are to visit 'the North Pacific, Far East, Australasia and Indian Ocean area.'

It was the reference in the official itinerary to 'Australasia' which caused alarm in New Zealand. According to *Asahi Shimbun,* when inviting British participation in RIMPAC it was the explicit intention of the US to apply pressure to the Lange government. Campaigners in New Zealand have since pointed out that all but one of the Global 86 ships could deploy nuclear weapons in wartime.

We have established, however, that only two of the ships are actually permitted to carry nuclear weapons in peacetime — through a process known as 'certification'. This means that both the ship and its crew must pass special tests before nuclear weapons go on board

The only ships in the Royal Navy now certified to carry nuclear weapons in peacetime are, according to reliable defence sources, CVAs — light aircraft carriers like *Illustrious* — and Type 22 frigates, such as HMS *Beaver.*

Until the Falklands war, nuclear depth bombs were routinely carried aboard all certified ships. But as that task force sailed south in 1982 it was suddenly realised that fully three quarters of the Royal Navy's small stock of nuclear weapons were on board. These were ordered to be offloaded at Ascension Island. There was considerable alarm that the Navy had been able, under existing regulations and without further political authorisation, to carry nuclear weapons into a war zone.

Since then, even certified RN ships have seldom carried nuclear weapons. So New Zealand could safely receive at least some of the task force ships, if asked — and thereby demonstrate that any British refusal to admit the *absence* of nuclear weapons on board was artificial and politically contrived. ●

Secret link intact

NEW ZEALAND is still receiving intelligence from the United States, despite refusing permission for a US Navy destroyer to enter its ports last year. In the row that ensued, the United States was widely claimed to have broken intelligence links with New Zealand.

But secret US intelligence messages sent to Australia, copies of which have been obtained by the *New Statesman,* show that intelligence information transmitted from the US Navy's Pacific headquarters in Hawaii is still available to the New Zealanders. The messages, although addressed initially to the US Navy in Canberra, were also sent to the New Zealand Navy in Wellington. The messages are dated well after cut-off was said to have occurred in April 1985.

The documents support last month's claim by Auckland University specialist Dr Peter Wills, that the alleged cut-off was more fiction than fact. Wills has obtained information about the links from the US Defence Department by using the Freedom of Information Act.

The information swapped between US and New Zealand tracking centres would have played a significant role in this week's rescue of 700 passengers from the Soviet cruise liner *Mikhail Lermontov* off the New Zealand coast. The movements of all Soviet bloc and Chinese shipping appear in international bulletins called 'OSIS Red'.

OSIS stands for the (US) Ocean Surveillance Information System, which has its headquarters near Washington and supplies Fleet Ocean Surveillance Information Centres (FOSICs) for the Pacific and Atlantic, respectively located in Hawaii and London. Separate bulletins, called OSIS White, cover all so-called 'free world' shipping movements.

In the event of an emergency like this week's sinking, the information can quickly be used to find all other shipping likely to be in the area. This appears in daily bulletins called 'CASPER'.

The messages are marked 'NOFORNEXCEPT ANZUK', which means that the information may not be passed to foreign countries other than Australia, New Zealand and the UK. It is believed that in return, New Zealand is still feeding both 'sigint' (signals intelligence) and maritime information into the Western intelligence network. ●

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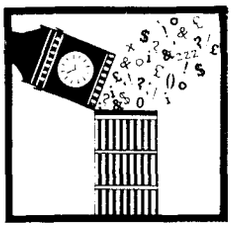

Why Tory wets want Thatcher to stay as leader

FOR THE TIME being, the crisis is over. Last week a *Channel Four News* survey of Conservative backbench MPs found that large minorities are unhappy with the government's handling of the Westland affair; and quite a few want economic policy to be eased up. But asked whether Mrs Thatcher should resign as Prime Minister, a 20-to-one majority said 'No'.

This week Mrs Thatcher has tried to kill speculation that she might go. She talked on *Panorama* of having more work to do and of being willing to fight any challenger for her leader's crown.

Conventional wisdom on the Left holds that all this is good news. Thatcher is an electoral liability to the Tories, so the argument runs. If she leads them into the next election, then Labour (and, presumably, the Alliance) are bound to do well. But if she were to resign, a new leader might restore Tory morale, present a fresh image to the electorate and erase memories of her recent inglorious behaviour.

I doubt whether this hypothesis is valid. I believe it is more likely that a Thatcher resignation would be good both for the country and the Left and bad for the Tories — including the Tory wets. Indeed, should pressure mount again later this year — say, after more bad opinion polls, humiliation at Fulham and a drubbing in the May council elections — then intelligent wets are likely to speak vociferously in favour of retaining the leader that they normally despise, for a reason that we shall come to a little later.

As to the general calculation about Thatcher's future, it is a matter of means and ends; or, to put the point more formally, of dynamics and comparative statics. If, say, John Biffen or Douglas Hurd or Sir Geoffrey Howe were now Conservative leader, then the party might well be more popular. None of them would have got into such a tangle over Westland, the leaking of Sir Michael Havers's letter, or British Leyland. Any of them would present a more compassionate face to the electorate. They would not have started from here.

The Tories' problem is that they do start from here, rather than from where they would like to be. They are in politics' muddy trough, not its sunny uplands. Their task is to get from here to there. Changing leader might look like a quick way of completing the journey; in fact it is full of hazards. The damage done by the process of ditching Thatcher could well outweigh any advantages the new leader has to offer.

Let us consider what would happen if a new bout of Thatcher-to-go speculation appears later this year. She could in theory be challenged in the autumn at the beginning of the new session of Parliament, and be defeated — or win so narrowly that her authority disappears and she chooses to go.

That is the bloodiest but least likely scenario. As long as Thatcher chooses to defend her position publicly, as she said on *Panorama* she would, the overwhelming majority of Tory MPs would vote for her — not only those who positively like her (a diminishing breed) but those who fear that a public bust-up would destroy the party's electoral appeal.

So if Thatcher goes it will be 'voluntary', in that she will appear to resign of her own free will. She will say her eyes are playing up again and that she wants to spend more time with Denis. In reality, a posse of senior

PETER KELLNER

Tories would tell her the game is up. Lord Whitelaw and John Wakeham, her chief whip, would be among the more public figures, but there would be others: older, landed Tories who have never really liked her, but hated Heath even more, were glad when she beat him and have grudgingly admired her capacity to win elections.

THE TROUBLE WITH such a 'quiet' resignation is that it would not really be quiet at all. Witness the fevered reports of the past month when she has been under no imminent threat: imagine how the news would sound and the reports would read if the threat were real. Blow-by-blow accounts of the putsch would appear in the Sunday papers; hurried drawings of furious confrontations at No. 10 would appear on television news. Many of the details would be wrong, but the public would receive the inescapable, and correct, impression that she jumped because she was pushed.

All that would be bad enough for the Tories. What would follow would be worse. Three times in the past 40 years the Tories have changed leader while in office. But each time there was a minimum of public debate. The new leader 'emerged' under the old rules; and in any case the private clashes (for example between Rab Butler and Harold Macmillan in 1957) concerned the rival candidates' personal qualities rather than their political ideology.

When Thatcher goes, the battle for the succession will be very different. It will effectively be out in the open. It will involve a profound and bitter debate about the nature of the Tory party. Should Thatcherism be revived by Norman Tebbit or strangled by Douglas Hurd? Does the party want to defend or disown its economic policies of the past seven years? Does it believe that higher public spending is a good thing, or not?

Some Tories who recognise the dangers of such a battle argue that things would be done in the old way. A new leader would 'emerge' before Thatcher goes and there would be either no contest or only a nominal one — a token wet, say, against . . . well, who?

There's the rub. Had Michael Heseltine not gone ape; were Sir Geoffrey Howe not so dull; if John Biffen had built up a solid base of support; had Douglas Hurd more Cabinet experience; if Norman Tebbit were not so strident, or Peter Walker not so irredeemably wet — then the emergence of a consensual leader might make sense.

But each of the possible candidates has his drawbacks. No natural successor is in sight. Besides, the bitter arguments inside the Tory party that have been unleashed by almost seven years of Thatcherism will not easily be suspended at the moment of her departure. A change of leader is one of the few times when the people who choose a successor have a real opportunity to influence the direction of their party. Only if Thatcher's successor were obviously a stop-gap could a truce between wets and dries be imagined. But would an obvious stop-gap have public appeal? One of the Tory Party's virtues under Thatcher has been its apparent clarity of purpose. Squandering that clarity would be to take a great gamble.

So if Thatcher does go, a real contest is likely. Tory wets then face two risks. The first is that they might lose. The second is that they might win. If, say, Tebbit takes over, then it could be another ten years before the wets have another shot at the party leadership, whether the Tories remain in office or lose power.

The more interesting risk concerns the consequences of a wet victor in a closely-fought leadership contest. If the Tories then go on to win the next election, no problem. But if they lose it, then the dries are bound to argue that the ditching of Thatcher helped to cause the party's defeat. A wet leader would command only conditional loyalty from the Thatcherites.

A hard-headed wet, if such a being can logically exist, is likely to make the following calculation: no wet is likely to win a leadership struggle this year. Even if he did, the Tory party will probably be hammered at the new election, putting their crown at risk. Far better to stay with Thatcher, lose the next election, and *then* mount a challenge to her leadership. With care and a little luck Thatcher, Tebbit and their friends will then be finished and traditional Tory 'one nation' values can then be reasserted. Nothing is certain in politics, but the best way to sink the SS Thatcher is to leave the captain in charge as the ship sails towards the iceberg. □

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Balaclava-wearing liberationists in action try hard not to get caught — more like guerrillas than a protest movement

Photographs: ALF

ANIMAL WRONGS

As the Commons addresses itself this week to an attempt to update the Cruelty to Animals Act, JOLYON JENKINS analyses the drives behind the growing animal liberation politics

AFTER YEARS OF campaigning for abolition of the 110-year-old Cruelty to Animals Act, with its now feeble constraints on the use of animals for experiment, animal liberationists are contemptuous of the mild tinkering in the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill on which work started in the Commons this week. Home Office inspectors' powers to stop particular research projects are to be enhanced, but tobacco, alcohol, cosmetic, and military research involving animals is not to be prohibited outright, as they demand.

Increasingly, animal rights supporters are arguing that, *as a matter of fact*, medicine based on animal experimentation is bad medicine, and animal-based farming is unhealthy and wasteful of resources. But even if the provision of human comfort and the alleviation of human suffering *were* advanced by use of animals, they would be rejected by the more 'extreme' (as the newspapers would put it) of the animal rights protestors. If the price of being pro-animal is being thought anti-human, they will reluctantly accept it. It's this principled standpoint which is most obscured by the more and more frequent reports of their 'outrages'.

Where is today's (still evolving) animal rights and liberation movement coming from? It would be preposterous to try to identify any one precipitating factor. Merely to take an almost 'atmospheric' influence, decades of Occidental interest in Eastern teachings, particularly Buddhism, about 'ladders of being' — which seem to contradict anthropocentric Christian tradition — affect even those who have never consciously attended to anything oriental.

But there is one figure whose name continually crops up today in conversations with animal rights activists. He is Australian Peter Singer, whose book *Animal Liberation*, first published 1975, popularised both that phrase and the concept of 'speciesism'. As a professional philosopher, Singer puts forward an analogy between the arbitrary oppression of humans on the grounds of race or sex, and the oppression of animals on the grounds of species. If it's wrong to treat an individual badly simply because they are black or female, then it's wrong to treat them badly because they are not human. Given that animals have interests even though necessarily they are not the same as those of humans — pigs have no interest in voting — they have a right to equal consideration of what *are* their interests.

Singer also approaches the subject like a campaigning journalist. Half his book is a detailed and authoritative exposition of the way animals are treated in factories, farms and laboratories. Others of course have done such research, but the importance of the fact-gathering enterprise, not only by Singer, can't be over-emphasised. Just at the point when the 'advanced world' has by and large stopped being afraid of 'Nature' the sheer accumulation of deliberately publicised painful information about the use of animals in experiments and in food production has shifted the vantage-point on what is being done to animals 'on our behalf'. The animal liberation movement in its activist manifestations could hardly have emerged without the photographs and statistics of suffering.

BUT THE PHILOSOPHY is there too, and the stronger the adherence to it, the more unacceptable, the more of a 'sell-out', this week's Bill comes to appear. One evident perspective is of course to see animal liberation as an extreme sub-culture of the wider Green/ecology movement. Nature must be conserved and saved from human exploitation (*humanity* as 'red in tooth and claw'), and just so, animals must be saved and conserved.

Divergence occurs, however, when and if the Green movement is seen as making the long-term benefit of human beings the primary reason for conservation and preservation of the environment. The full-blown *moral* approach to the rights of animals necessarily speaks of the rights of other consciousnesses — of non-human consciousnesses — and doesn't need to place itself inside any arguments about benefits to the 'human race'.

Four years ago, active animal liberationists spoke scathingly about ecologists who only wanted to save the whale so that humans could feel good about there being whales, but who were happy for millions of rats to be vivisected each year. Since then, there has been some convergence, particularly at the extreme radical end of animal liberation movement, where not just individual animals but 'animality' itself is thought to need liberation:

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the countryside has to be given back to animals, humans have to be prepared to stop living in unnatural cities.

Ecology movements, of course, are or seem luxuries affordable only in societies which have a high degree of control over the natural environment; equally, they are only necessary in those societies. Among younger and less analytical liberationists, there's also an apocalyptic feeling, parodiable as: 'look what humans have done to the world — isn't it time animals had a chance?' that clearly has ecological strands.

AS AN ACTIVIST politics, animal rights fits only jaggedly into other left-wing campaigns and commitments — when it isn't asserting an absolute right to priority over them.

> Despite the various anti-fur campaigns under way, a Saturday afternoon walk down any high street reveals just how many of these obscene garments are being flaunted by perverts . . . Spitting and verbal assaults are very effective [but] what will make them think even more is economic sabotage. With this in mind, a careful squirt of battery acid from a syringe on the back of the coat will have the desired effect. It is not immediately noticeable but will shortly cause a large bald patch. Happy squirting!

The suggestion comes from a recent issue of the Animal Liberation Front Supporters' Group newsletter. According to Ronnie Lee, press officer for the ALF, there are 1,500-2,000 people in Britain who regularly take part in direct actions for animal liberation. He estimates that six actions take place a day, ranging from small guerrilla-style paint-stripper attacks on the cars of 'vivisectionists' to the all-out assaults on laboratories and factory farms.

Animal rights have provably entered the popular consciousness. According to the most recent poll (Gallup 1985), nearly 1.5 million people have given up meat, though only half for 'moral' reasons — an increase of 23 per cent over the previous year. More specifically, animal liberation is arguably *the* youth movement of the '80s. Magazines as diverse as *Just Seventeen* and *Class War* discuss it, and a host of rock stars and youth cult figures have announced that they have become vegetarians for moral reasons. The trend has been most marked in women between 16 and 24, 10 per cent of whom are now vegetarians. It's also a phenomenon mainly of the A and B social groups in the south of England — particularly in London.

Animal liberationists have been reluctant to form pragmatic alliances with other political groupings. In Bradford, for example, natural sympathies between anti-racists and animal liberationists became strained over the halal meat issue. The same thing happened with feminists and the notorious 'dumb animal' anti-fur coat campaign. What animal liberationists see as a refusal to compromise, other left wing groups perceive as arrogance.

'True' liberation movements are expected to demand development of class-consciousness — that a class recognise its oppression and organise against it. Animals can't (we suppose) ever be expected to react in such a way against human exploitation. The usual analytical armoury of the Left has yet to find its 'fit' with Singer and his disciples. □

CLOSING DOWN DEMOCRACY

GAGS ON FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

If the 1986 Local Government Bill is not successfully amended by the House of Lords, it will soon be illegal for local authorities to announce the time of day reports DUNCAN CAMPBELL. Research by PATRICK FORBES

VIRTUALLY unnoticed in comparison to the controversial bills to abolish the GLC and the metropolitan counties, the new Local Government Bill has been slipping through Parliament at breakneck speed, in the face of hitherto low-key opposition. Introduced in November, the Bill now need only pass a report stage in the Commons, before becoming law on 1 April.

But this Tuesday the House of Lords defeated the government and amended the first of the Bill's provisions. A final committee hearing on the Bill, to be held next Tuesday, is their last opportunity to make other necessary changes. It will then remain to be seen whether the government will permit the Lords' amendment to stand in the Commons. A final committee meeting on the Bill will be held in the House of Lords next Monday, 24 February.

For many British local authorities, the Bill will create more havoc in a shorter time than does the upheaval of abolition. It marks the latest, major step in turning local authorities into service institutions whose political role right wingers would like to see wholly limited to debating such matters as the efficiency of street-sweeping services.

The Bill as originally drafted would prohibit local authorities from publishing any material which might 'affect public support for a political party' — which can mean almost anything, or nothing. This week's Lords' amendment, if it stands, will restrict this prohibition to material 'designed to affect', rather than merely 'likely to affect' public support. Another section of the Bill restricts the use of local authorities' discretionary powers to distribute information or to run publicity campaigns to providing 'information relating to the functions of the authority' only.

This provision is intended to ban campaigns on and the distribution of information about such matters as ratecapping, the Social Security Reviews, privatisation, abolition, nuclear free zone policies, police monitoring, or immigration, as well as a host of other issues taken up in the last few years by Labour councils. But this section also makes it illegal to give any information to the public which is not directly related to the strictly-defined 'functions' of a local authority — or to allow any local authority funded bodies to produce publicity either.

This threatens all kinds of advice services, including welfare rights and benefit 'take-up' campaigns on behalf of the elderly, ethnic groups, or other minorities. Since local authorities do not run trains, the Bill also appears to make it illegal for a local authority to include train times in its local newspaper — even if it does run a bus service to the station. It would also be illegal to tell people the time, or the weather, unless giving this information related directly to a local authority function.

A 'code of practice', whose terms have yet to be written, will also be introduced to control local authority publicity. The exact legal force of the code of practice remains to be resolved (in the Lords). But as presently drafted, it would prohibit the inclusion of party political material in media interviews given by council members. Under the present 'embryo' code of practice, Ken Livingstone or David Blunkett would be banned from giving a newspaper an opinion of Conservative government policy.

The real sting of the Local Government Bill lies in its being short, hastily drafted, exceptionally wide-ranging, unnecessary to the purpose for which it is said to be required — and in many places so badly set out as to be virtually meaningless. Its provisions really could ban local authorities from telling you the time. Or they could ban almost nothing. The courts will have to decide. But whoever eventually loses the argument about what the Bill does mean, lawyers will be the unequivocal winners.

TO MULTIPLY the Bill's effectiveness in harassing local authorities, it also requires each authority to keep a detailed account of every item of expenditure on publicity, and to make

VPP & Syndication International

Right, Robert B. Jones MP, a leading light of the far Right 'St Andrews Mafia'. Left, Edward Leigh MP, a right-wing prankster and consultant to 'CAMMAC'

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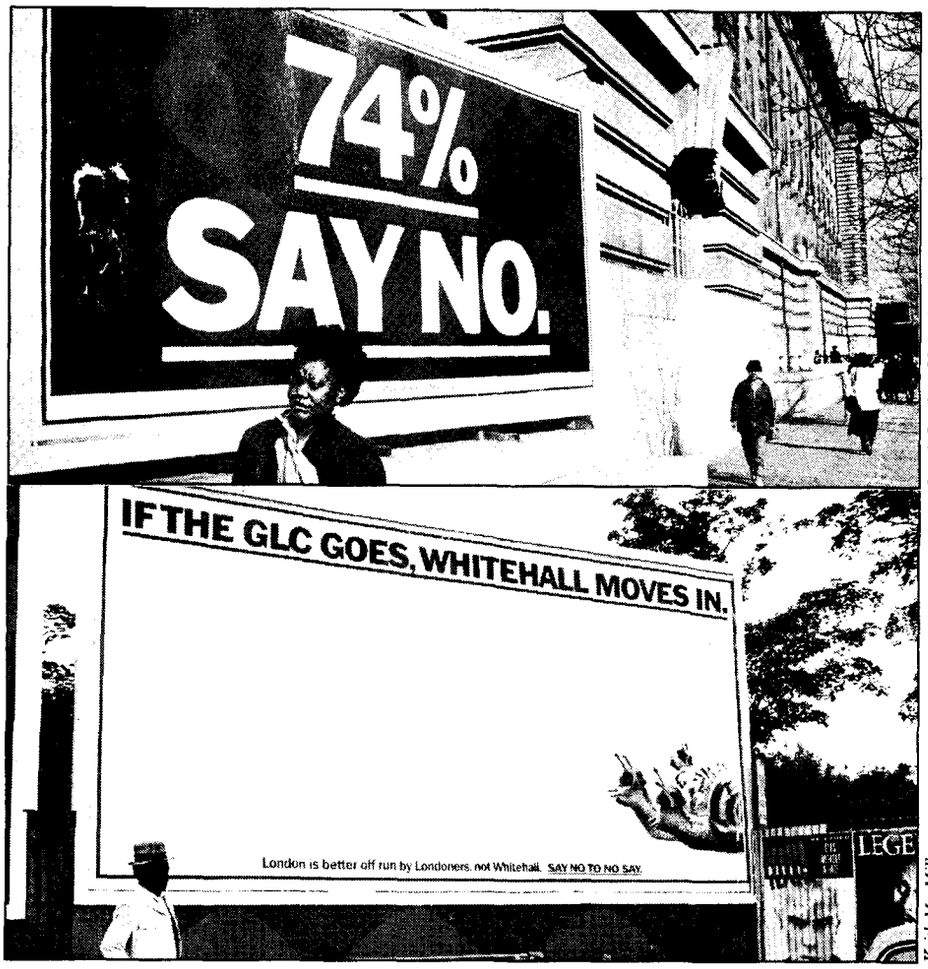

Laurie Sparham/Network

Keith MacMillan

The Department of the Environment have stated officially (in a letter to the *New Statesman*) that in their opinion, most of the GLC anti-abolition posters, considered in isolation, would still be legal. Neither of these posters would, say the Department 'fall foul of the prohibition in the Bill'. Since stopping campaigns like this was supposed to be the major purpose of the new Bill, some Conservatives may be as unhappy about the Bill as most local Authorities

this available for public scrutiny. Ratepayers can then take action in the courts.

This aspect of the Bill is specifically intended to assist harassment groups which are now being set up in Labour-controlled areas, in advance of the Bill becoming law. Prominent in organising such groups is the so-called Campaign against Council Corruption.

'CAMACC' is the latest in a string of front organisations for a small and noisy group of unscrupulous right-wingers. Their previous major activity was the US-funded anti-CND dirty tricks organisation, the Coalition for Peace through Security (*NS* 12 March 1982). The people involved are Edward Leigh, who became an MP in 1983; and Julian Lewis and Tony Kerpel, both of whom failed to get into Parliament.

Lewis now runs a company called Policy Research Associates as an umbrella organisation. Lewis is secretive about the sources of funds for his campaigns. Kerpel, well known as a histrionic and red-baiting Conservative councillor in Camden, has recently moved into the Department of the Environment as a political adviser to Environment Secretary Kenneth Baker.

From the very beginning, the Bill has been presented as a necessary measure to stop 'party political propaganda on the rates'. But party political propaganda on the rates has always been illegal. Indeed, the only explicit example of such alleged propaganda that right wing lobbyists have been able to cite was a recent judgment against Lothian Regional Council, when a judge ordered the council to pulp its newspaper after considering that one article was 'calculated to promote the election of Labour candidates'. Existing law was already quite sufficient to deal with the problem.

The real motive force for the Bill has been the Tories' widespread detestation of many recent local authority campaigns. Their fury has risen in proportion to the scale and success of such campaigns, especially those mounted by the GLC against abolition.

Behind this broad tide of intolerance lies the work of two right-wing cliques, who have tried to set the pace for legislation, and pull the government into line behind them. One group centres on Edward Leigh and his CAMACC associates. The other, much larger, group has no specific identity, but is nevertheless well known to government supporters as 'a nasty little sect on the right — one of the few really cohesive groups there are'. This 'little gang' is commonly known as the 'St Andrews Mafia' (most of them were educated or educators there in the early 1970s).

One of the 'St Andrews Mafia', PR consultant Michael Forsyth MP, helped start the ball rolling with a pamphlet attacking 'Politics on the Rates', published by the Centre for Political Studies in April 1984. The pamphlet picked out a few controversial items of expenditure — and then went on to muddle in everything else, however popular or clearly legal, that the Right don't like.

As the issue became a new focus of Tory anger, the 1984 Conservative Party Conference was promised action. At first, this took the form of the Widdicombe Committee of Inquiry into the Conduct of Local Government Business, which was appointed in February last year.

But even the relatively short wait of a year for the inquiry to report was unacceptable to the government. Claiming 'growing public concern about the use made by some local authorities of their discretionary powers to engage in overt political campaigning at public expense', former Environment Secretary Patrick Jenkin asked the Inquiry to prepare an interim report on this topic by July 1985.

Widdicombe's interim report did not find evidence of that level of public concern. The Committee noted at the outset that they did not accept Jenkin's premise that such political campaigning had actually occurred; or even, if it had occurred, that the public were concerned about it. On the evidence available, no 'general conclusions' could be reached.

But they did note that, although the number of 'political' complaints received by the Advertising Standards Authority had risen from 100 during 1983 to 177 in 1984, some 62 of the latter complaints were about the government-backed campaign for the sale of British Telecom. Less than half the remaining 'political' complaints were about local authority advertising or publicity.

BUT THE WIDDICOMBE INQUIRY was (so far as the government was concerned) never intended to be more than an additional smokescreen behind which their real intentions might usefully be concealed. Even before the Inquiry was appointed, a special interdepartmental policy committee was meeting to consider the provisions Ministers wanted to put in the Bill.

Together with junior environment minister William Waldegrave, the committee included representatives from the Home Office (which has responsibility for voluntary organisations), the DHSS, the Treasury and the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Offices. Soon after the Widdicombe team was appointed, Environment Secretary Patrick Jenkin quietly made it clear that he 'did not preclude the possibility of early legislation'.

Even before Widdicombe's interim report was published in August a second Cabinet committee met to plan the details of the new legislation. In retrospect, it can be seen that so far as local authority publicity was concerned, Ministers saw the Widdicombe Inquiry as little other than a potentially useful strategem to justify pre-ordained plans.

But both the 'St Andrews Mafia' and the Edward Leigh groups then moved in with pre-emptive strikes against the government. Leigh himself and Roy Galley, one of the 'Mafia', introduced private members bills on local government publicity in June and July 1985. Their intention was to predetermine what legislation was required, to put pressure on Waldegrave and Kenneth Baker as new Environmental Secretary to start legislating.

Detailed drafting work on the Bill began soon after the 1985 Conservative Party Conference, when Baker announced the Bill on 2 October. The final drafting of the Bill by

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Parliamentary counsel took less than a month, working at what civil servants admit was 'breakneck' speed.

To the 'chagrin' of William Waldegrave, the 'St Andrews Mafia', including MPs Galley, Robert B. Jones, Michael Forsyth, Michael Brown, Christopher Chope, with many others from the far Right, filled the Bill Committee, 'It was virtually a roll call', according to a government supporter. 'Their view was that 'everyone who disagrees with us has to be silenced. It was difficult to hold them down'.

After the far right had manipulated the Commons committee, the Opposition had little chance of effectively amending the Bill. And the government didn't care too much anyway. Waldegrave and his supporters are secure perhaps in the expectation that, handed a parcel of absurdly wide 'catch-all' laws to interpret, judges will impose the most restrictive interpretation on left wing local authorities.

The new Bill has been claimed to be 'in line with the Widdicombe Inquiry'. But in fact, other than imposing an explicit statutory ban on party political publicity, it runs counter to both the letter and spirit of Widdicombe's recommendations. His interim report particularly stressed the importance of *not* muzzling what local authorities have to say:

> It is important that at all times, particularly in times of wide political differences, our political system should accomodate the free expression of opposing views . . . it is right for local authorities to be able to explain their views on controversial matters affecting them.

Widdicombe also recommended that local authority powers to produce information 'about matters affecting local government' should be 'left unchanged':

> We reject the view that this is too wide a scope . . . We think that local authorities should be entitled to inform those living in the area of the consequences of proposed changes in or affecting local government.

For sophisticated local authorities, following the pattern established by the GLC over the last three years, there may well be tortuous legal ways to sidestep the Bill's greatest difficulties. Such authorities will carefully take legal advice first, altering the style rather than the substance of what they do.

One useful approach — grudgingly admitted by the Department of the Environment to be legal — is to continue as before, taking the view that what they do now in the way of say, take-up campaigns or nuclear free zone publicity, is and has always been 'information relating to their functions'.

Another leading lawyer points out that the phrase 'support for a political party' has, as yet, no precise legal meaning. Since almost all activity can ultimately be 'political', a local authority could reasonably and creatively construe that to refer only to times of imminent elections.

Now, one day remains for the House of Lords to deal with the rest of the Bill. If passed unaltered the Bill's main effect will be not to ban propaganda, but to undermine democracy and free speech — and to provide a select band of lawyers with holiday homes and lush pastures, all at ratepayers' expense. □

GOVERNMENT'S SECRET HANDBOOK

HOPELESS HYPOCRISY OF PROPRIETY RULES

In our second extract from the previously unpublished 'Questions of Procedure for Ministers' CLIVE PONTING dissects the 'paranoiac' advice on secrecy

BRITISH GOVERNMENT, as conceived by 'Questions of Procedure for Ministers', is a private operation carried out by a small group of Ministers and senior civil servants. There is no understanding, let alone acceptance, of any idea that government should involve the public or even the public have a right to know what is being done in their name.

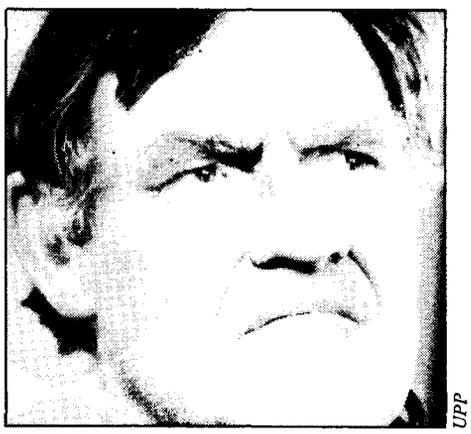
The government is responsible for spending about £140 billion a year, or about 45 per cent of the national wealth, and taking decisions that affect the day-to-day lives of every member of the public. All of this is done behind a wall of secrecy suitable for protecting a crucial wartime operation. It is not just a matter of protecting the way in which the government operates — the Cabinet and its network of secret committees — but the simple fact that the government is discussing a subject must be kept under wraps: 'Premature and unauthorised disclosure of matters under discusssion . . . damages the reputation of the Government and impairs the efficiency of administration'.

Any government will have important military and diplomatic affairs and secrets that cannot be discussed in public, but British administration is conducted on the paranoiac assumption that every piece of information has to be subjected to the same level of military style secrecy. Two characteristics dominate Whitehall: an excessive wall of secrecy and a flow through this wall of propaganda masquerading as information.

'Questions of Procedure' is insistent that little or no information should be given out to the public before a formal announcement of policy is made in the correct constitutional way to Parliament. Internal papers should be circulated on a strictly 'need-to-know' basis, only those directly concerned should know anything about what is going on and 'information' officers in departments should not see Cabinet documents.

As in so many other areas 'Questions of Procedure' is hopelessly hypocritical about what actually goes on every day inside Whitehall. Far from being reticent about its proceedings, the government is engaged in a constant round of activity, briefing the media and planting stories. 'Questions of Procedure', though, primly says that 'in appropriate cases it may be in the public interest to communicate certain information in confidence . . . for the purposes of guidance: but this is permissible only when it is known that such confidence will be respected.'

In practice what happens is that the No 10 Press Secretary, currently Bernard Ingham,



UPP

Bernard Ingham (See also p15)

holds two press 'unattributable' briefings a day, one at 11 am for the evening papers and one at 4pm for the dailies, to plant whatever stories are required. On Thursdays, the Leader of the House of Commons gives a full scale briefing and on Friday afternoons Bernard Ingham holds a special meeting just for the Sunday papers.

In the same way the Leader of the Opposition and the leaders of the Alliance have their special sessions with the press each week. And every hour of the day politicians are talking to journalists and giving them as many stories as they think will suit their personal interests and ambitions. Cabinet Ministers spend much of their time talking to journalists, telling them exactly what went on in Cabinet and often spiced with any damaging stories they know about their colleagues. The Westland affair is only the most recent blatant example of daily life in Whitehall, though telephoning the Press Association and leaking passages from Ministerial correspondence was a bit beyond the norm.

All of this is conducted behind the polite fiction of the 'lobby' rules, where all the conversations and briefings never officially take place and the sources of the stories are suitably disguised. So Bernard Ingham usually appears as 'sources close to the Prime Minister' and Cabinet Ministers as 'senior Whitehall sources', while many of the more personal stories attributed to 'friends of . . .' originate from the person himself.

WHITEHALL IS NOT interested in the free flow of information and an informed public debate. Instead what it tries to achieve is manipulation of the news through the lobby system and the deliberate planting of stories often to suit personal ambitions. In these

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efforts Whitehall is aided by the collaborationist attitude of the media who are content to accept stories on this basis.

And what of the civil servants who are involved in this rather seedy world? They are supposed to be politically neutral, yet at the higher levels they are deeply involved in advising Ministers on highly political matters. Just where is the dividing line between public administration and party politics?

'Questions of Procedure' tells us that civil servants should not be asked to prepare Parliamentary Questions simply in order to increase the number favourable to the government. Yet under administrations of every political colour the 'planted' question is a daily occurrence. The Parliamentary Private Secretary of the Minister will find a compliant backbencher, who will then be given a question drafted by civil servants and be told on what day to put it down.

Under this government there are signs that the civil service is expected to be more involved in party political affairs than ever before. In 1983, six months before the last general election, Michael Heseltine was appointed Defence Secretary. One of his first actions was to set up a special unit, known as Defence Secretariat 19, filled by civil servants, to write anti-CND propaganda that was, in most respects, indistinguishable from Conservative party literature.

The Westland affair has shown that civil servants in the private office of a Minister become very closely involved in his political battles. For example, John Mogg, Leon Brittan's private secretary, spoke to the Tory backbench MP Winston Churchill to 'brief' him about what was going on. A few years ago this is the sort of task that would have been seen as essentially 'political'.

'Questions of Procedure' tries to pretend that the processes of government are noble, uplifting and concerned with selfless devotion to the public good. In practice the 'public interest' comes a long way down the list of priorities. □

Next week: Ministers' private interests

Clive Ponting's new book Whitehall: Tragedy and Farce *will be published by Hamish Hamilton on 27 March.*

CONFIDENTIAL

Propriety and Security in the Conduct of Government Business

All Ministers should be concerned to protect both the Government's reputation for integrity and the confidentiality of its proceedings which is the essential basis of collective responsibility. Ministers should therefore take care to conduct themselves, both in public and in private, in such a way as to avoid becoming involved in any circumstances which could either damage the Government's good name by provoking scandalous speculation or be used against them as a means of pressure by hostile intelligence agents. On first appointment and, in certain cases, on appointment to a subsequent Ministerial office, Ministers will be briefed by the Security Service, who will explain both the basic threat to our security and the system of protection against it. They will also be invited to sign a declaration that they have read the relevant provisions of the Official Secrets Acts.

Premature and unauthorised disclosure of matters under discussion by the Cabinet or its Committees damages the reputation of the Government and impairs the efficiency of administration. Ministers who share the collective responsibility for the Government's programme must be kept generally aware of the development of important aspects of Government policy. But outside this limited circle knowledge of these matters should be confined to those, whether Ministers or officials, who are assisting in the formulation or execution of the particular policy concerned or need to know what is afoot because of its effect on other aspects of public business for which they are responsible.

Government policy should not be discussed with persons outside Government service unless this is necessary for the transaction of public business. Care should be taken to see that no discussions of Government policy are held in places where they may be overheard; and special care should be taken to protect the security of all Government papers, particularly those which are classified.
The following considerations should be borne in mind:

● It is within the discretion of Ministers to decide which of their advisers or subordinates should be shown Cabinet and Cabinet Committee documents. Such papers should not normally be seen by any save their immediate advisers concerned in the formulation of policy. Cabinet memoranda and Conclusions should not be circulated to Information Officers or their staffs except in so far as they relate to the work of their own Departments.

● Documents reflecting the personal views of Ministers are in a special category; and their handling requires special care. It is contrary to the doctrine of collective responsibility to make known the attitude of individual Ministers on matters of policy.

● Serious leakages of information can occur when the Press or broadcasting agencies are enabled to piece together isolated items of information, each of apparently little importance, gathered from several sources. It is therefore unwise to allude prematurely to even relatively minor or partial aspects of matters the disclosure of which has not been authorised. In appropriate cases it may be in the public interest to communicate certain information in confidence to a responsible editor, Lobby correspondent, etc., for purposes of guidance: but this is permissible only when it is known that such confidence will be respected.

● A PICKWICK telephone should be used for conveying information classified TOP SECRET and SECRET whenever one is available. The normal telephone system (including Federal) is not secure and a scrambler gives no protection against deliberate interception. When PICKWICK is not available the following precautions should be taken:

(a) Long distance calls. Calls from within a radius of 50 miles of London to places outside that radius and vice versa may go by radio relay and may therefore be intercepted. Such interception is facilitated by the comparative ease with which certain calls may be selected, i.e calls over private circuits, calls to identified numbers of intelligence interest and those calls where a scrambler is used. TOP SECRET information should never be conveyed during long distance calls. SECRET and CONFIDENTIAL information should be conveyed only when the national interest outweighs the risk to national security. It is essential that a scrambler should NOT be used but that the content of the call should be so disguised as to be unintelligible to a hostile intelligence service.

(b) Local calls. Where in cases of extreme urgency TOP SECRET and SECRET information has to be referred to it is essential that a scrambler should be used, and conversation should be in guarded language. There is less objection to CONFIDENTIAL information being passed on the telephone on a local call; but this should be done in a guarded manner and a scrambler should be used whenever possible.

It is undesirable that Ministers should have direct contact with persons offering their services as intelligence agents. If a Minister should be approached either direct or through an intermediary he should offer no comment but should as soon as possible inform his Permanent Secretary of the approach.

These rules alone, however, will not ensure that the Government's conduct of public business is not prejudiced by premature disclosure. All Ministers are expected to set an example in exercising discretion and to see that their example is followed.

Political Impartiality of Civil Servants
Civil servants should not be asked to engage in activities likely to call in question their political impartiality, or to give rise to the criticism that people paid from public funds are being used for Party political purposes.

Civil servants should not be asked to prepare Parliamentary Questions with the object of increasing the proportion of Questions on the Order Paper favourable to the Government.

Ministers should not ask civil servants to attend, still less to take part in, Party Political Conferences. It is an established principle in the public service that civil servants in their official capacity should not accept invitations to conferences convened by, or under the aegis of, Party political organisations. In order to preserve the reputation of the Civil Service for being completely immune from Party affiliation it is equally important that no civil servant should be in attendance at Party occasions. If a Minister wishes to have a brief to explain his Departmental policies or actions, there is no reason why this should not be provided; but neither the author of the brief nor an Information Officer should be present at the conference or meeting. The situation is, of course, different when a Minister requires officials to be in attendance not in order to attend the conference or to take part in its business but to enable him to carry out urgent Departmental business.

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MEDIA

Thatcher's bulldog begs for more cats

FRANCIS WHEEN

BERNARD 'BARMY BERNIE' Ingham, the Prime Minister's chief press secretary and Whitehall's answer to Harvey Smith, seems to enjoy living up to his reputation as a blunt northerner. He was in characteristically pugnacious form earlier this month when he delivered a lecture to the Worshipful Company of Stationers. Unfortunately, most press coverage of the event dealt only with his refusal to answer questions about Westland, and his escape through a side door to avoid reporters and photographers. A pity, because the lecture itself deserves wider attention.

'One of my ambitions,' he told the worshipful audience, 'is to elevate the reporter in the hierarchy of newspapers.' A likely story. Press officers are the enemies of honest reporting. I don't mean to cause offence — some of them are charming, intelligent people — but it's always been a mystery to me why press and PR officers are allowed (encouraged, even) to join the NUJ, for all the world as if they were bona fide journalists. They are not. Their interests are diametrically opposed to those of journalists.

One of Ingham's complaints was that we don't make more use of these people. 'When it comes to checking,' he said, 'government press offices, to judge from all I have heard over the years, have a fund of cases where journalists have chosen to write first and verify not at all.' Anyone who has ever had any dealings with government press offices will raise a snort of derision at this. Trying to check something with them is slow, messy, frustrating and ultimately pointless — like swimming through blancmange. I once spent an entire day trying to check a statistic with a Whitehall press officer. Eventually I suggested that we could both save ourselves a lot of trouble and time if I could speak directly to the statistician responsible. 'Oh no,' came the reply. 'That would most improper.'

Ingham's moan about reporters' failure to check with press officers leads on to a more general — and crucial — point about the nature of journalism. In Ingham's view, 'journalism today appears to be driven less by a search for the Holy Grail of fact than by a set of assumptions about society which at worst predetermines, or at best greatly influences, the journalist's perception of the facts he (*sic*) ultimately establishes, or seeks to establish'. The journalist ought, instead, to be 'the prospector in the geology of news who digs and pans for the gold of which a service to the public is made'.

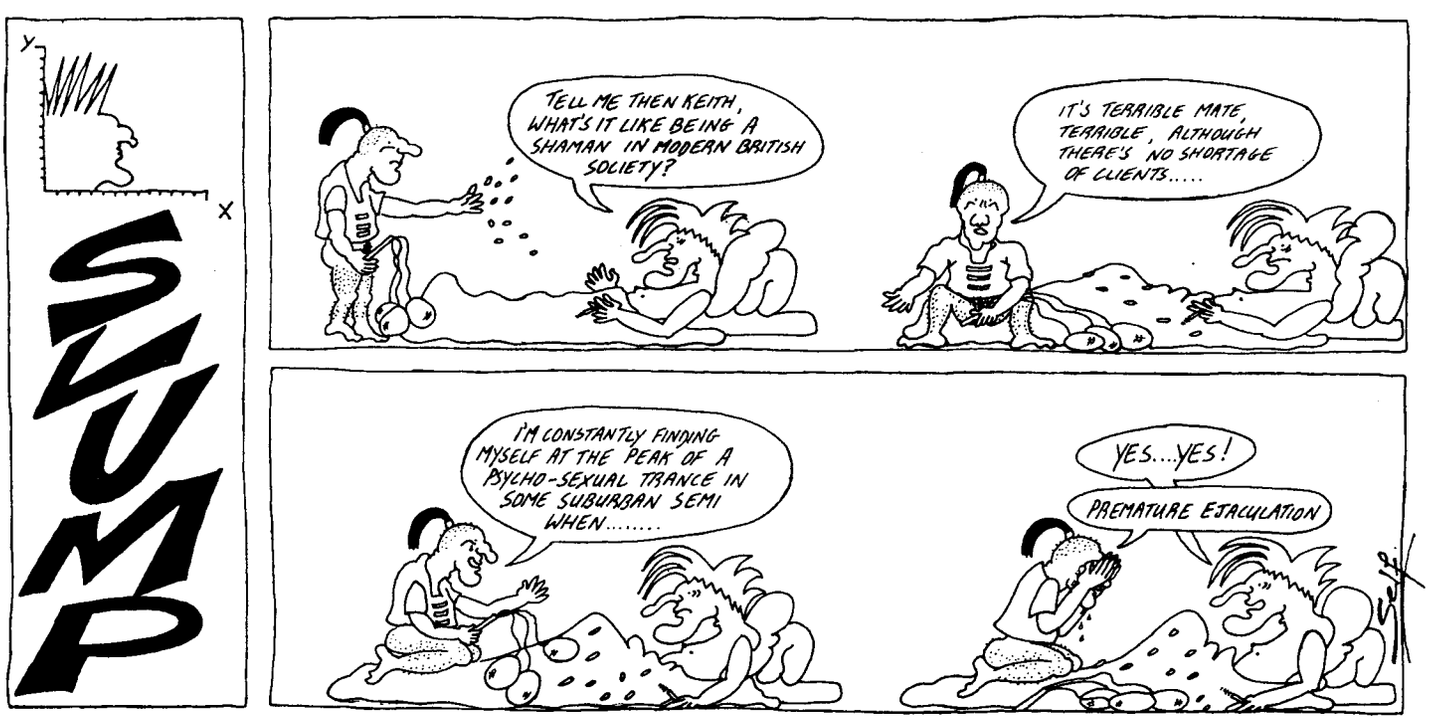
The late and still sadly missed Claud Cockburn seems to have anticipated Ingham's lecture with uncanny accuracy, even down to the metaphor, when he wrote many years ago that 'to hear people talking about the facts you would think that they lay about like pieces of gold ore in the Yukon days waiting to be picked up . . . by strenuous prospectors whose subsequent problem was only to get them to market'.

As Cockburn pointed out, such a view is dangerously naive. A fact in itself is pretty well meaningless. What matters, and what determines whether the journalist reaches the truth or not, is how that fact is related to other facts. And the choice of which facts the journalist seeks to establish and to relate to other facts is inevitably governed by 'a set of assumptions about society'. It always has been and always will be. As Claud Cockburn put it: 'In that sense all stories are written backwards — they are supposed to begin with the facts and develop from there, but in reality they begin with a journalist's point of view, a conception, and it is the point of view from which the facts are subsequently organised.'

What is rather alarming is that quite a few people of power and influence in the media still seem unable or unwilling to recognise this. In the case of Ingham, perhaps one shouldn't mind: he is, after all, an enemy of journalism, so it's hardly surprising that he should misunderstand journalism. But he isn't the only one. When the two *Rough Justice* journalists were disciplined last month, the BBC's Bill Cotton told them: 'You had a fixed idea of the truth which you then set out to prove'.

What Ingham calls a set of assumptions Cotton calls a fixed idea of the truth; but they both mean the same thing. In their opinion, journalism should be nothing more than the assembling of as many facts as possible — random, unrelated, disorganised facts. Any attempt to impose order on them would allow room for prejudice to creep in.

The logical conclusion of this argument is that a story about a cat stuck up a tree should be given the same space and prominence as a story about Thatcher's problems: how can a journalist promote one over the other without using 'a set of assumptions'? It's possible that this is indeed what Ingham has in mind. Since most of the publicity his boss gets at the moment is fairly damaging, I should think Ingham would be grateful for a few cat-up-tree yarns which could keep her off the front pages for a while. □


Y
X
SLUMP
TELL ME THEN KEITH, WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING A SHAMAN IN MODERN BRITISH SOCIETY?
IT'S TERRIBLE MATE, TERRIBLE, ALTHOUGH THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF CLIENTS.....
I'M CONSTANTLY FINDING MYSELF AT THE PEAK OF A PSYCHO-SEXUAL TRANCE IN SOME SUBURBAN SEMI WHEN.....
YES....YES!
PREMATURE EJACULATION

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DIARY

Denis MacShane

Morzine-Avoriaz

For anyone who has flickering doubts that some people in Britain are doing very, very well, a couple of hours at Geneva airport any Saturday or Sunday should put them at ease. The braying hooray voices of the English about to embark on their annual skiing holiday swamp the airport even before the doors from the customs hall have opened. An old Australian joke asks how you know when a planeload of poms has arrived in Sydney: answer, the engines have stopped but the plane keeps whining. The vowels of the English on the pistes appear straight out of a Sloane handbook, the owners of these voices decked out in the over-priced finery that passes for ski equipment in Harrods, Lillywhites and Alpine Sports. If by chance I find myself on a chairlift beside a fellow countryman, I usually carry out a quick socio-political investigation. My best finds so far are a merchant banker who thought Mitterrand was a communist, a farmer who moaned about low profits on a holiday costing at least £500 per person per week, and the wife of an oilman in Saudi Arabia who claimed that *Private Eye*'s revelations about the nurse flung to her death in Jeddah were only the tip of a sandberg.

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I know the statistics will belie these superficial impressions, and I must admit that some of my best *Guardian* and *New Statesman* reading (and writing) friends are devoted skiers, but overall the sight and sound of the English skier is that of the Tory upper middle classes at play. There is always a strong dash of the military as well. Friends who run ski shops and chalets in the Alps are always amazed at how much time and money Her Majesty is willing to spend on seeing to it that her officers master the slopes by day and the bars and discos by night. In Verbier, I once asked a local which were the bars frequented by the English. Just look for the ones that smell of vomit was the reply. It's not always that funny. In Morzine, a French ski resort about an hour's drive from Geneva, there were notices in many places last weekend saying *Interdites aux Anglais*. The reason? Four holidaymakers are accused of rounding on Christian Baud, the owner of a discotheque, who refused to serve them with any more alcohol at three in the morning. They kicked him to the ground and beat him into a coma. Someone who saw Baud just before he died in a hospital in Geneva said his head was blown up bigger than a football. The four skiers now wait accused of murder. Their nationality? You've guessed.

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A fortnight before this tragedy, Morzine had a friendlier English visitation in the shape of Princess Anne, husband and children. She passed unnoticed in the place and it is one of the nicer things about skiing that underneath bonnet and goggles a man is as good as his master, or indeed future king. I keep reading about the famous at places where I ski, Prince Charles at Klosters, Frank Sinatra at Gstaad, Sir Robin Day in Val d'Isère, but somehow I have missed them all. In fact, if you live within a couple of hours of the Alps, skiing is a pleasingly demotic sport. The equipment and clothes are to be found at half English prices in the Co-op or at bring-and-buy sales before the season starts. A day's ticket in the cheaper resorts is to be had for £6 and the bulk of the French or Swiss skiers are people for whom a day's skiing is about as exotic as going fishing in the Grand Union Canal or playing golf on a municipal course in Glasgow. French and Swiss schoolchildren are all given a week off in February in order to go skiing — five million French will snap into skiis this month. Given that a trip from Lille or Brittany to the Alps is longer and more complicated than from, say, London or Manchester, I'm surprised that British schools don't take more advantage of the low price ski holidays that can be arranged for children.

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It's the old class thing again. Sorry to keep harping on about it, but having lived outside Britain for most of this decade the permanent and growing supremacy of class differences in the old country is what strikes one most about Thatcher's Britain in comparison to any other European country or America. Skiing and the public schools seem to go hand in hand. Since private education appears to be one of the few growth and all-English industries of our times I suppose we shall see a steady increase in Sloanes on the slopes. Personally I blame Harold Evans. About ten years ago he brought out the finest book, then or now, on how to ski. It bubbled with enthusiasm and, although ostensibly for beginners, still has tips and advice that if only I could master them would make all the difference to my skiing. Evans's passionate engagement with skiing marked the beginning of the end of his great days as a Fleet Street editor. Pre-ski Evans was the king of the DC-10, thalidomide, and Crossman Diary campaigns. Après-ski Evans became the anti-union, consumerist, me-too front man for Murdoch's takeover of *The Times* and *Sunday Times*.

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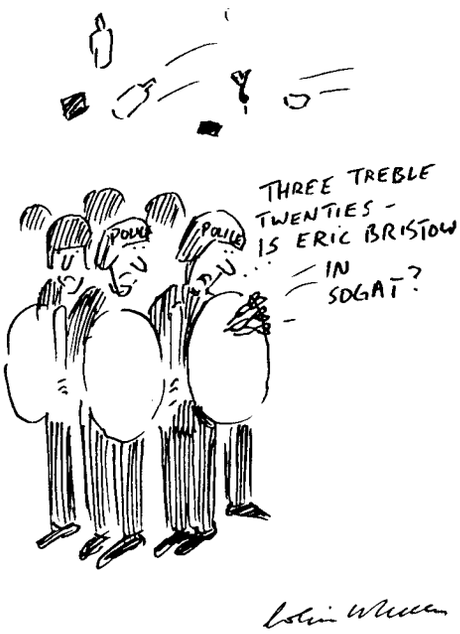
But I cannot blame him. Skiing tends to rot the mind and to elevate hedonism to new levels. After a tentative start to my sporting life as outside left for St Joseph's primary school soccer team in Harrow, I found the playing of rugby and cricket too much for me at my secondary school though I can watch both games without end. Skiing I only discovered when nearly thirty. It was a revelation to fall, literally, across one sport I enjoyed and could manage quite easily with help from instructors and patient friends. Anyone who has been skiing will know what I mean — the mixture of fear, weather conditions, and endlessly improvable technique that empties your head of all other problems. Curving swiftly down a steep off-piste powder slope, trying desperately to avoid the inevitable fall, and you simply haven't got time to worry about what's happening back home. For a few brief seconds Thatcher's Britain no longer exists. No wonder the Sloanes love their skiing. And what a shame it has not yet become the mass sport for the rest of the population.



ROGER WODDIS

The Trouble with Ronald

President Reagan said at a press conference that he did not know 'anything that's more important than the bases in the Philippines.'

The Chief Defect of Ronald R.
Was Blindness to the way things are,
A Fault which doesn't rate a cent,
Unless you are the President.

What opened up a Can of Beans
Was Murder in the Philippines
And Fraudulence on such a Scale
It even made Habib turn pale,
And caused the Bishops to declare,
'Dear God, this Ballot isn't fair.'

Observers of the Utmost Fame
Arrived in droves; and when they came
They warned the Chief, with Deep Unease,
'There is no cure for this Disease.
Marcos is nothing but a Crook.'
But Ronald smiled and told them, 'Look,
I'm deaf as well as blind, OK?
I need Clark Field and Subic Bay.
Don't give me all that Freedom stuff;
He's anti-Commie, that's enough.'

Dictators loaded down with Gold
Don't always do as they are told,
And Ronald would have seen the sign,
If only he'd read *Frankenstein*.

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IT'S BUSINESS AS USUAL WITH 'FRIENDLY' DESPOTS

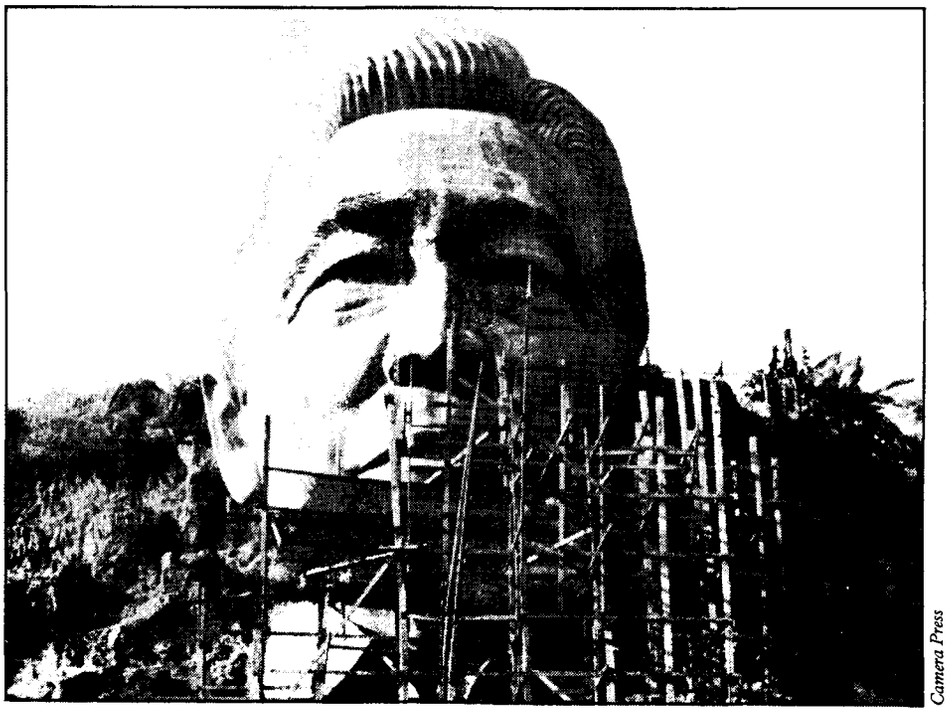
When Benigno Aquino was assassinated in 1983 CLAUDIA WRIGHT reported the US had lost a rare chance to promote a successor to Marcos who would preserve the US bases in the Philippines. For it isn't the appalling records of dictators such as Duvalier, Doe and Marcos which worries the US, so much as their ability to protect American interests

IN THE LAST five months, the US has intervened in attempts to replace formerly close allies: Samuel Doe in Liberia, Jean-Claude Duvalier in Haiti and now Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. Coming so soon, one on top of another, these interventions — only two of which have been successful — raise important questions: is the Reagan Administration losing its taste for friendly despots in the global campaign against the Evil Empire? is Washington ready to loosen its grip on strategic military bases to permit the revival of local democracy?

The muddle in President Reagan's mind over what to say about the Philippines election suggests there is considerable uncertainty within the Administration over what to do and how far to risk the loss of US control in client states. Rampant confusion among US officials and the President's own lack of understanding of world politics give rise to numerous embarrassing gaffes in foreign policy. However, the three points the President himself understands in US strategy have not changed.

No more Shahs will fall: No one in the Administration will pursue a course of action that resembles the Carter Administration performance during the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1978. This doesn't mean all of Washington's dictators are indispensable, or that toppling them is something the Reagan Administration would never contemplate. The President still believes, in Jeane Kirkpatrick's words, that 'the fabric of authority unravels quickly when the power and status of the man at the top are undermined or eliminated.' What this means in practice is that the US will not cut down a friendly dictator unless Washington has full control over his successor. If that isn't assured, the Administration will, in Donald Regan's words, 'do business' with whoever's in power.

Last November, US officials thought their man, General Quiwonkpa, was a safe bet for US purposes in Liberia, as were civilian opposition leaders like Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, a former Citibank corporate official. What the Americans didn't anticipate was the Israelis stepping in to help Doe foil the coup. But with Quiwonkpa dead and Sirleaf-Johnson on trial for her life, the Administration is now turning its back on the opposition and returning to 'do business' with Doe as before.



Camera Press

The monumental Marcos trapping the Americans into providing rock-like support

In Haiti, for most of last year Ambassador Clayton McManaway regularly met US researchers throughout the island before deciding there was an alternative to Duvalier that would preserve US control of Haiti — indeed enhance US popularity by eliminating the Duvalier abuses. This alternative was the military junta headed by General Henri Namphy that seized power on 7 February, with an army and civil bureaucracy whose salaries are paid out of US funds. The result was one that brought cheerful US flag-wavers on to the streets of Port-au-Prince and added to the Administration's confidence that it can 'restore' democracy without damaging strategic interests.

No opening towards the left: In Administration thinking, there can be no softening towards those Third World opposition groups the US has until now treated as leftists, communists, or communist stooges. If anything, officials in the Pentagon and the State Department believe the 'Left' is everywhere in retreat. Reagan's cronies believe they are winning their regional contests with Moscow's allies — that anti-communist insurgencies in such places as Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua and Afghanistan are picking up strength, and advancing steadily across the battlefield.

In the Philippines, it was not the Marcos dictatorship as such, but his evident ill-health and possible death that prompted the apparent Administration move toward an accommodation with the Filipino opposition. Before his return to Manila and assassination in 1983, Benigno Aquino thought he had State Department and CIA support to run for the Presidency without threatening the US bases at Clark Field and Subic Bay.

By killing him Marcos eliminated the most popular alternative to his rule that Washington could support. He has also been able to frustrate efforts to advance reform-minded professional soldiers independent of the clique of Aquino's assassin, General Fabian Ver, and yet committed to US doctrine against the New People's Army in the countryside.

According to classified cables from the US embassy in Manila, the Administration thought Marcos would probably die before the scheduled Presidential election in 1987. It

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concluded that the succession is much too important to the US to be left to Marcos to decide. Following the show of popular support for the opposition after Aquino's murder, US policy was to prepare opposition parties that have been moribund since Marcos imposed martial law in 1972, unite the ambitions of the opposition behind a single Presidential candidate, and exclude candidates that are 'leftist-nationalist in character' or connected in any way with the Communist Party of the Philippines.

No retreat from US bases: In Manila on 6 November 1985, the US embassy chargé Philip Kaplan, hosted a breakfast meeting for Richard Holbrooke, a Former Assistant Secretary of State for the region and a group of Filipino opposition leaders, including Jose Cojuangco, Cory Aquino's brother, Butz Aquino, her brother-in-law, and two backers of Salvador (Doy) Laurel — at the time the sole, self-declared presidential challenger to Marcos. A classified State Department summary of the meeting reveals that its purpose was to give the Filipino opposition Washington's marching orders.

According to the document, Holbrooke said 'he thought it looked like the opposition ticket would be some combination of Cory Aquino and Doy Laurel.' The opposition leaders agreed. Kaplan then 'emphasized the need for the oposition to get its act together.' One point he wanted them to understand was that the US was opposed to 'their position favoring legalization of the communist party . . .' The chargé warned that 'Marcos was likely to hit hard on the theme that the opposition is "soft on communism".

Well before Marcos called his snap election, the US embassy was reporting confidently 'that the opposition could be expected to act responsibly and that the US-Republic of Philippines relationship would prosper.'

On 6 November, as the opposition leaders met with US officials at the start of the election campaign, the administration delivered its ultimatum: 'both the chargé and Holbrooke again underlined the importance of avoiding being portrayed as anti-bases or soft on communism.' US support for 'free and fair elections', they wanted the opposition to understand, depended on keeping the base issue out of the campaign. If not, they warned, it 'would not play well in the US.'

Three months later, Marcos has presented the Administration with an ultimatum of his own. Since the Americans have failed to prove they can organise a more effective political machine in the Philippines than Marcos's, and have radicalised Filipino sentiments far more than they intended, there can be no alternative for safeguarding the US bases to Marcos himself. With Cory Aquino now torn between dropping her campaign, or preserving the anti-Marcos mass movement by moving towards the left, Marcos knows there can be no future for her in the Administration's calculations — so long as he remains alive. With less than three years left himself, President Reagan cannot disagree. □

The classified documents referred to were obtained by Walden Bello, co-director of the US-based Philippines Support Committee.

GORBACHEV'S NEW BROOM

REFORMER ADOPTS STALIN'S STYLE

The 27th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, which opens on Wednesday 26 February, will see the consolidation of Gorbachev's power. He has been hailed as a reformer but a disturbing parallel can be drawn between his methods and those which Stalin used to terrorise the Soviet people for over quarter of a century, writes ANDY McSMITH

TO PREPARE FOR the liquidation of the kulaks and the suppression of all dissent within the party in the late 1920s Stalin made certain institutional changes. These included:

- asserting the authority of the party's central Organisation Department over provincial party bosses, and of Russian cadres over local communists in the border republics;
- giving the central planning authority, Gosplan, supremacy over the separate ministries (or Peoples Commissariats);
- increasing the powers of the police and the prosecutor's department;
- and promoting a group of his own friends and associates, many of whom, coincidentally, were connected with the Don valley region, north of the Caucasus mountains.

Within the next fortnight, the Soviet communist party will have completed the most drastic overhaul of its leading cadres in half a century and Mikhail Gorbachev can look forward to another 15 years in command, with a team of his own choosing, and no serious rival in sight. The difference between his methods and those of Stalin is the fate of those deemed 'dead wood'. Gorbachev has simply pensioned them off with comfortable incomes.

The extent to which he has stamped his own authority on the ageing Soviet leadership will be demonstrated when the new Central Committee — the party's 300 strong 'parliament' which meets four or five times a year — is selected. There have been so many changes since the 26th Congress in 1981, that the biggest block vote on the present committee is made up by state pensioners. The Kremlin has been resorting to the unusual step of organising a series of mini-conferences for regional party bosses, who have no other forum through which they can meet.

In the past three years, about 125 out of 200 regional party first secretaries, plus 49 of the 97 ministers and state committee chairs who make up the central government, and at least 13 of the 20 heads of department at the party's central headquarters have been replaced. This purge began while Yuri Andropov was General Secretary, but about three quarters of the changes have taken place in the short time since Gorbachev took command. One of the officials sacked in January was Andropov's son, Igor, the Soviet ambassador in Greece.

It is quite possible that in the 'reformed' Central Committee new members will outnumber the old. They, in turn, will ratify the new Politburo and the party secretaries. As many as five out of the ten secretaries may go — including 82-year-old Boris Ponomarev, who has run the International Department since 1949. That will almost amount to a clean sweep of Brezhnev's team.

Yet at the same time as he has ruthlessly replaced the top of the hierarchy with his own supporters, Gorbachev's reputation as a reformer has a sound basis in fact. His actions and public pronouncements display a real concern to eliminate corruption, nepotism and laziness in high places, to deal with drunkenness, encourage localised initiative in economic management, improve agricultural output, and break the deadlock in arms negotations with the NATO powers. But there is a grim irony about the methods he is using to achieve ends which most outside observers would applaud. If they bear a superficial resemblance to Stalin's bloodbath in the

Gorbachev's inner sanctum

Politburo current members

GORBACHEV, Mikhail (55), since 1980; General Secretary of the CPSU since 1985

ALIEV, Geidar (62), since 1982 First Deputy Chair, USSR Council of Ministers

CHEBRIKOV, Viktor (62), since 1985; Chair of the KGB since 1982

GRISHIN, Viktor (71) since 1971; a pensioner, not expected to retain his membership

GROMYKO, Andrei (76), since 1973; Chair, Praesidium, USSR Supreme Soviet since 1985

KUNAEV, Dinmukhamed (73), since 1971; First Secretary, CP of Kazakhstan since 1964

LIGACHEV, Egor (65), since 1985, Secretary of the Central Committee since 1983

RYZHKOV, Nikolai (56) since 1985; Chair, USSR Council of Ministers since 1985

SHCHERBITSKY, Vladimir (67) since 1971; First Secretary, Ukraine CP since 1972

SHEVARDNADZE, Eduard (57) since 1985; USSR Foreign Affairs Minister since 1985

SOLOMENTSEV, Mikhail (72) since 1983; Chair, CPSU Party Control Committee since 1983

VOROTNIKOV, Vitali (60) since 1983; Chair, RSFSR Council of Ministers since 1983

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1930s, it is because even the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has only a limited range of options; and, for Gorbachev, the choice was between acting as he has done, or tolerating the stagnation of the Brezhnev years.

IN A SENSE, Leonid Brezhnev was also the great decentraliser in Soviet history. He allowed ministers and regional bosses to run their own fiefdoms, and hold their jobs until they died — provided, of course, that they loyally accepted Brezhnev's right to be General Secretary for life. It was the fact that everybody was secure for life which discouraged achievement and resulted in stagnation.

But since Brezhnev's death in November 1982 the Party Organisation department has replaced more than half the regional party leaders, very often with their own inspectors from Moscow — and, in the process, have put native communists in the Central Asian republics under Russian supervision. The department's former head, Egor Ligachev, is now Gorbachev's second in command.

The KGB and the prosecutor's department have inevitably benefited from the drive against corruption. The KGB chief is now among the five or six most senior Politburo members. First Deputy Prime Minister Geidar Aliev was a KGB officer for 28 years. The former KGB boss in Latvia is now running the party there. Highly publicised gestures like the release of Shcharansky actually strengthen the KGB's hand, by giving it the power to assist or obstruct the General Secretary's foreign policy.

Among the figures who have emerged in the past three years from Gorbachev's home province of Stravopol, or the neighbouring regions of Rostov and Krasnodar, are:

- Vitali Vorotnikov (60), chair of the Russian federal government;
- Vsevold Murakhovsky (60), who may be joining the Politburo next week;
- Georgi Razumovsky, (50) awarded the Order the Lenin in January, for his sterling work as the new head of Party Organisation, who will probably be elected a Secretary of the Central Committee next week; and
- Alexander Vlasov (63), who became USSR Minister for the Interior on 25 January.

As in Stalin's era, the forward march of officials of the central planning authority, Gosplan, has been more remarkable. Gosplan's new chair, Nikolai Talyzin (52), is likely to be raised to full membership of the Politburo, and the organisation will then be directly represented at this level for the first time since 1955. Another new development is that his deputy has full ministerial status. The new Prime Minister, Nikolai Ryzhkov (56) was a Gosplan official until late in 1983.

Embedded deep in Russian folklore is the myth of the strong ruler who asserts himself over treacherous courtiers for the common good. Nineteenth century Russian revolutionaries ran aground on the peasants' unshakable belief in the Benevolent Tsar. Only a generation ago, ordinary Soviet people worshipped Stalin like a god. Today's school children are taught to admire Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, and Vladimir Lenin — violent autocrats all. Another generation may add Mikhail Gorbachev to the list. □

What's going to happen to your right to protest?

The new Public Order Bill plans to give the police new powers to control and prevent the right to protest. If the Bill becomes law, and it probably will do, the police will be able to control and dictate the terms on which this right may be exercised. The organisers of a march will have to give six clear days notice of it to the police. The Bill will create new police powers to impose conditions on your protest in advance or on the spot – for a wide range of reasons. The police will have new powers of arrest and it will be a criminal offence not to abide by their conditions. The Bill also creates other new offences, including one of 'disorderly conduct' and others of riot, violent disorder and affray.

People don't really know how these new police powers are going to affect them and their democratic rights. That is why the GLC has prepared information material explaining the proposals and what they could mean. These are available FREE and you can send for them today. They contain information of vital importance to all Londoners.

CALL NOW 01-633 5944

TO: The Police Committee Support Unit, Room 602
Greater London Council
County Hall, London SE1 7PB
or ring 01-633 5944 (24 hours)

Please send me further information on the new Public Order Bill.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____

Please add me/us to your mailing list for the "Policing London" newsletter.

NS3

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LETTERS

When Johnny goes marching home . . .

Wiktor Moszczynski, London W5

What a delicate dissertation on the decent disarmer's dilemma (*NS* 7 February). I hope that Clive Ponting's controversial piece will be taken on board by Neil Kinnock and Denzil Davies as they try to prepare the ground for selling Labour's policy on unilateral nuclear disarmament to the electorate before the next general election. Certainly Ponting's scenarios must be considered by those preparing the programme for Labour's post-1988 cabinet strategy in scrapping Trident and Polaris and booting out (sorry, requesting the departure of) the US nuclear bases in Britain.

However, there is yet one more nettle to grasp over the nuclear bases. Clive Ponting touched on this only marginally when he referred to the Vickers Shipyard workforce in Barrow and the Polaris warhead design teams in Aldermaston. I refer to the question of what happens to the British personnel and the tertiary industries which mushroomed around their barbed periphery fences in a denuclearized Labour Britain.

I hope note is taken of the Bury St Edmunds Constituency Labour Party's attempt to prepare a local study group report on the effects of the removal of the American bases from Mildenhall and Lakenheath. Yes, both these jewels in the US military archipelago are in that constituency.

The study group, initiated by the Mildenhall Labour Party branch, intends to open up a debate for local residents, and the local media, as to how they view the future of the sites when the bases are eventually abandoned by the Americans. They intend to consider the advantages of having facilities left over that could be used for housing, health, education, recreation, sports; the release of housing units in the public sector reserved until now for US Army personnel; the reduction in work load for the local magistrates. They intend to invite suggestions on what new industries can be introduced to these sites 'when Johnny comes marching home'. They will be evaluating just how many British citizens are dependent on the bases for their livelihood, and also what planning blight and commercial disincentives have plagued the region because of the American presence. There seems to have been a deliberate policy to retain the 'remoteness' of the area and to discourage investment in a proper road and public transport network for the district, for strategic reasons.

The advance of such a report, and such a public debate, is that it makes the 'unthinkable' (i.e. the departure of the Americans) not only 'thinkable', but even almost desirable. Even the present local missile-happy MP, Eldon Griffiths, might have to peer into the abyss and argue why he prefers the present bleak environmental and economic picture in his constituency to the promise of development that could follow the closure of the bases. The only condition is that the Labour Party nationally must back this project by giving thought to what public investment it could steer into the area.

The proposed Bury St Edmunds pilot study needs to be mirrored this year in other centres which could be affected by the denuclearization and de-Americanization policies. Such positive planning for the future would not only restore Party and public morale, but it would help to counter the lobbying of 'unelected groups' against Labour's defence programme, which Clive Ponting has been warning us about.

Leo Abse and gays

Dr Jonathan Cutbill, London SE3

I read Leo Abse's letter (*NS* 14 February) with deep anger. In the 60s he took considerable political risks to help through Parliament marginal reforms of laws against gays. I do not think his motives were to help us. Rather he thought that if the laws were eased the court cases and the publicity would stop. Homosexuals would be removed from the sight of decent people like him.

Well, it didn't happen that way and now he is reduced to labelling the victims of Aids as mentally sick — see latest issue of *Time and Tide*. It is time that any residual gratitude to Leo Abse should vanish and gays should see him for what he always was: a bigoted and devious politician.

Antony Grey, London NW2

My former colleague of homosexual law reforming days, Leo Abse MP, has a partial recollection of his *Time and Tide* article on Aids if he imagines that it looks at gay men 'in their full humanity' and does not demean them as 'distressing creatures'.

The bizarre flavour of his extraordinary piece is perhaps best conveyed to your readers by the following extracts. Speaking of the 'case histories' (how obtained he does not disclose) of 'so many' Aids victims, Abse says 'only the purblind deny the source of their sickness lies in the soul: the phenomenon of unassuaged homosexual men frenetically, incessantly seeking sex, having hundreds if not thousands of partners each year, their fumblings only to be punctuated by intervals of heroin taking . . .' And describing a young Aids victim dying in hospital, Abse claims that 'he was most clearly not sad; on the contrary, he was buoyed up by the constant invigilating of the doctors, the never-ending tests to which he was subjected, the solicitous care of the nurses and by the interviewing. His happiness was obvious: now he was the centre of attention. On his death bed at last, for the first time, all the wounded narcissism of his neglected childhood was being healed.'

If Leo Abse believes that such comments do justice to the humanity — let alone the psychology — of those about whom he writes so disparagingly, then he will believe anything.

Smallpox was deliberate

Piers Vitebsky, Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge

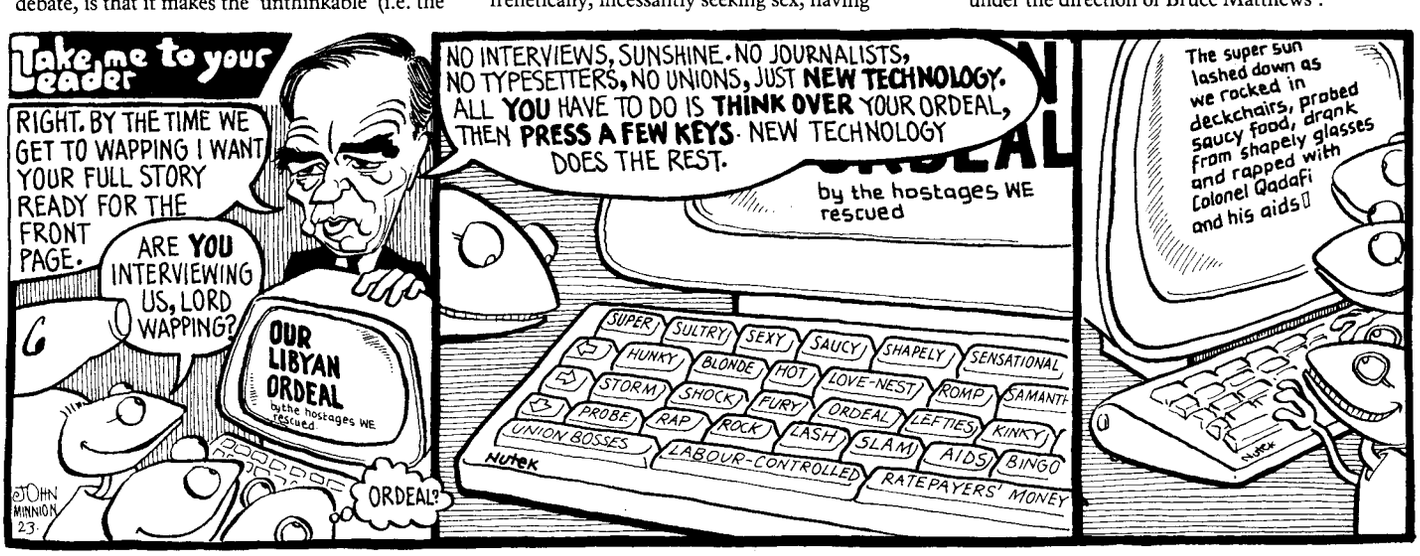
The British Pharmaceutical Industries advert (*NS* 31 January) referred to in Madeline Landauer's letter (7 February) is even more impertinent than she suggests. Smallpox was often introduced deliberately by whites in order to clear land for occupation by settlers. This was done by leaving piles of infected clothing to be picked up by Indians as goodwill offerings. According to reliable sources, in parts of South America this practice continues today.

When I worked for Murdoch

H. C. Hardy, London Standard

In the article 'How Murdoch beat the unions' (*NS* 7 February) mention is made of 'Bert Hardie'. I presume this is a reference to me —Bert Hardy. That being so, I would like to correct the suggestion that 'six years ago I led negotiations under the direction of Bruce Matthews and that those negotiations failed'.

Having, as Chief Executive, planned and commissioned both the Wapping and Glasgow plants, I left Rupert Murdoch seven years ago, before negotiations with any labour union commenced. During my period of office with Murdoch, Bruce Matthews was a Director of News International, responsible primarily for the purchase of newsprint and the subsidiary Bemrose of Liverpool. At no time, therefore, was I ever 'under the direction of Bruce Matthews'.


Take me to your Leader
RIGHT. BY THE TIME WE GET TO WAPPING I WANT YOUR FULL STORY READY FOR THE FRONT PAGE.
ARE YOU INTERVIEWING US, LORD WAPPING?
OUR LIBYAN ORDEAL
by the hostages WE rescued
ORDEAL?
NO INTERVIEWS, SUNSHINE. NO JOURNALISTS, NO TYPESETTERS, NO UNIONS, JUST NEW TECHNOLOGY. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS THINK OVER YOUR ORDEAL, THEN PRESS A FEW KEYS. NEW TECHNOLOGY DOES THE REST.
by the hostages WE rescued
SUPER SULTRY SEXY SAUCY SHAPELY SENSATIONAL
HUNKY BLONDE HOT LOVE-NEST ROMP SAMANTH
STORM SHOCK FURY ORDEAL LEFTIES KINKY
PROBE RAP ROCK LASH SLAM AIDS BINGO
UNION BOSSES LABOUR-CONTROLLED RATEPAYERS' MONEY
Nutek
The super sun lashed down as we rocked in deckchairs, probed saucy food, drank from shapely glasses and rapped with Colonel Qadafi and his aids!
JOHN MINNION 23

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Clearing up pollution claims

I. P. Arnold, May & Baker Ltd, Essex

Alan Stephen's article (*NS* 17 January) is heavily weighted against May & Baker Ltd. He states that we were ordered to stop using the soak-away three years ago. Although this is true, he neglects to say that when the factory was first established we were actually instructed by the City Council, who were then responsible for Norwich water supplies, to use this system for disposing of our surface water.

In discussing potential water contamination, Mr Stephen does not quote the City Council's report which says 'drinking water supplied from the River Wensum is unaffected by May & Baker activity'. It goes on to say 'members pressed officers hard on this matter, but it was clear that water supplies were entirely safe'. Nor does Mr Stephen mention that the pipeline proposal has been planned since 1945, 11 years before the May & Baker factory even opened.

Mr Stephen quotes the level of mercury which the Friends of the Earth claim to have found on the roof of one of our buildings. Neither May & Baker nor the HSE inspectors have been able to replicate this figure in their own studies. Mr Stephen also quotes me as saying that if these levels were proved the company might have to clean it up. If these levels had been proved there is no doubt that the company would have cleaned it up, regardless of whether we had been forced to or not.

In talking about the cases of cancer, Mr Stephen says that we did not intend to make the results public. Actually, I told him that I did not *know* if we were going to make the results public, as has been correctly reported in the two local papers in Norwich. He further states that we would not give details of the scope of the enquiry and quotes me as saying that the whole of Norwich might need to be studied. I actually said that the study was a comparison of the rate of cancer incidence between our employees and similar age group populations in the area.

Mrs T's expense account

Robert Mackenzie, Penzance, Cornwall

I have never heard a really satisfactory explanation given for the terrific increase in expenditure at 'No 10' and Chequers since Margaret Thatcher took office.

The cost of running 'No 10' in 1979/80 was £1,299,601 rising dramatically until in 1984/85 it had reached a figure of £3,288,367. Foreign visits up to March 1985 cost £2,426,531. While entertainment for the period May 1979-March 1985 for Chequers and 'No 10' are given as £34,635. These figures of course do not include the PM's salary, messenger and cleaning services and any allowance for accommodation until 1983/84.

Toilet tax

William Johnson, London W1

S. Ungar (Letters, 14 February) is a little harsh on the Water Authorities in blaming them for poor housekeeping. The Southern Water Authority may well have increased apparent charges by 500 per cent since 1973, but some of the 'rise' was undoubtedly caused by the fact that the local authority water rates usually only included sewage charges. On their inception, the new Regional Water Authorities immediately charged for both sewage and water supply services. Inevitably this appeared as an unpleasant price rise to consumers.

Unfortunately, my original article described the water authorities as 'up to their ears in debt'. This phrase arose in editing. My point was actually that several of the water authorities have *liabilities* (not debts) which exceed their assets. Thus, North-West Water's crumbling sewers and polluted rivers make it unsaleable.

In fact part of the present government strategy is to *eliminate* water authority financial debts by 1987/8. It is the government's preoccupation with restricting the public sector borrowing requirement ('debt-capping' the water authorities) which is really responsible for the high water rate rises of recent years. The government may discover to its cost that consumers are more interested in the effective protection of public health than the size of water authority borrowing.

Finding a solution to crime pays

Richard Kinsey, Centre for Criminology, University of Edinburgh

Roy Carr-Hill (Letters 14 February) unfortunately represents the position typical of many 'critical' (or as he terms it 'non-ideological') sociologists and academics — namely 'Impossiblism': lecture after radical lecture giving 18 reasons why Marx, why Durkheim, why Weber are each in their different ways totally wrong. Thus, when it comes to the level of political intervention, Carr-Hill states 'yes, crime is a problem' but no, 'he can't contribute to its resolution'.

I am not in the least ashamed of adopting a realistic platform of political intervention — whether in policing, education or health economics — which takes the immediate problems of working-class people seriously and attempts to alleviate those problems. Local accountability of the police is one strategy to that end.

Take, for example, the current problem of Aids and heroin use in Edinburgh. It is only too easy to image the scene behind the closed doors of police headquarters when it was decided to crack down on the availability of needles as a means of reducing heroin use. Without external review and the necessary balancing of interest that that permits, we now have the tragic outcome: the spread of the Aids virus throughout the Edinburgh user community (as a result of sharing needles in the so-called 'shooting galleries'). Such problems are avoidable but they require political decisions to be taken in public with full access to the relevant information.

External review of police policy will not help prevent and reduce all crimes; but it is a step in the right direction to ensure that policing addresses real rather than illusory problems and recognises local need. If nothing else it can help reduce the problems generated by ineffective and insensitive policing.

Carr-Hill suggests that Labour's growing concern with crime and policing is merely a panic response to Tory rhetoric. An irrational fear of crime may be common in the middle-class suburbs of York. In the inner cities the reality of crime is a daily event and working-class fear of crime quite rational. If we do not recognise that reality and make a clear rational socialist response to those problems, then socialism is so much the poorer.

Correction

In the article 'A plot conceived and planned six years ago' (*NS* 7 February) we said that Geoffrey Richards, News International's lawyer, attended a branch meeting of EETPU London Press branch. In fact, this was *not* a branch meeting but negotiations between News International and three representatives from the EETPU London Press branch.

LOCAL AUTHORITY LOCAL JOBS

ONE-DAY CONFERENCE
SATURDAY FEB 22

Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way, London WC1

SPEAKERS:

MIKE WARD
DEPUTY LEADER AND CHAIR OF INDUSTRY AND EMPLOYMENT, GLC

HELEN JACKSON
SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

MARY ROGERS
GLEB

ROS CAVE
HARINGEY COUNCILLOR

JOHN DUNCAN
MERSEYSIDE CITY COUNCIL

JOE GORDON
CONVENOR, FORDS DAGENHAM

TIME TABLE:

9.30am - 10.00am	Registration of Delegates
10.00am - 12.30pm	Speaker and General Discussion
12.30pm - 1.30pm	Lunch (£1.50, Unwaged free)
1.30pm - 4.00pm	Workshops:

Working with trade unions and the community • Councils as buyers and employers • Training and Technology • The environment and socially useful production • Black employment initiatives • Women's employment issues • Investment of pension funds and enterprise boards • Employment and Disability

4.00pm - 4.45pm Plenary Session

Disabled access and creche available

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THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY OR MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Both photos: Chris Davies/Network

If we the public were cast as bemused spectators in the Westland affair, what roles were the leading politicians acting out? DAVID EDGAR reviews the show for its tragic potential, notes the avoidance of catastrophe, but nonetheless pinpoints the protagonist's fatal flaw: moral rectitude

WILL IT AS WE might, the Westland affair was never going to work. The problem was not the plot, which, although thin, was perfectly serviceable, nor (in many respects) the dramatic action, which was traditionally constructed around exposition, *hamartia* (error of judgement), *anagnorisis* (a moment, or in this case moments of revelation) and *perepeteia* (a sudden and unexpected reversal of fortune, such as might result from losing the confidence of the 1922 Committee at a crucial stage). Nor can one complain of the many subsidiary layers of pleasing irony. No, the difficulty all along lay with the protagonist herself. It wasn't quite that the affair was too piddling, or she too grand. It's more that they didn't *fit*. Margaret Thatcher has, God knows, all the prescribed properties: pride aplenty and flaws to spare. It's just that — in the manner of the old Shakespearian party game — it looked as if she'd been catapulted by some impish dramaturg into the middle of *the wrong play*.

To talk of politics in this Aristotelian fashion is dangerous. When Tony Benn claimed — in an impressive and under-reported speech in the Commons debate — that the affair had demolished the concept of Thatcherism as a distinct political

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phenomenon, he was of course reiterating the argument of his faction (for anyone who hasn't yet mastered the vocabulary of the re-alignment, denying the existence of 'Thatcherism' is code for opposition to the 'soft' or 'Euro' left — in the same way that quoting Disraeli used to be the password of the Tory wets), as well as repeating his more general accusation against the press and broadcasting media, which is that they are more concerned with personality than with policy, with style than substance.

But the traditional riposte to the Bennite argument — that 'Thatcherism' is merely a convenient label for a tendency that could have existed without her and may well continue to wield influence long after she has gone — should be qualified as well. It's true that on issues like (say) the deleterious consequences of almost every social development of the years 1965 to 1975, the speeches of Norman Tebbit, Rhodes Boyson and Margaret Thatcher (and the writings of Ronald Butt, George Gale and Colin Welch) are now virtually interchangeable, with key phrases popping up in speech after speech, to a point where both content and form can be seen to have outgrown their originator, and become a collective ideological possession. But it's surely also true that the characteristics of the cult are created in part by the nature of the personality. Indeed, that may be the reason why Mrs Thatcher herself appears to have mutated into a kind of pastiche of the original — as if, by some grim witchcraft, the persona had been secretly swapped for the person, the mask had melted into the face. (Perhaps this is the reason why, uniquely, Luck and Flaw have failed to capture her: you can't satirise that which is a parody already; the problem with the Thatcher puppet is simply that it looks — and sounds — more real than she does.)

So in reading the drama of Westland, you cannot ignore its central personality, and if it is true that, in this case, *hamartia* will not inevitably presage *catastrophe*, then it is her own status — or the status of her project — that has saved her.

IT IS OFTEN said that great public scandals take national forms (in Germany, they're about espionage; in Britain, more usually, sex). But it is also true that governmental crises possess certain transnational characteristics, and, in particular, there are rules about which crises end fatally and which don't. In the drama, it is necessary not only that the protagonist is destroyed by his or her own failing, but that that failing is central to the project of their lives (and, as such, has been the engine of their previous success). So Coriolanus is not brought down by his manifest Oedipal problems, but by his arrogance; Macbeth's prospensity to morbid imaginings does not destroy him, but his ambition does.

There are two obvious examples, from across the Atlantic, of terminal governmental crises which bear relevance to Westland. Jimmy Carter was beset with many problems throughout his presidency, but he was ultimately destroyed by the Iranian hostage crisis because his incapacity to resolve it provided a potent (and, in news terms, bitterly recurrent) metaphor for that brand of well-meaning but dithering honesty that had (in the post-Nixon years) proved so initially appealing. In many ways, indeed, the hostage crisis — and particularly the abortive attempt at rescue — would be a happy analogy for Westland, not least because it would lead inevitably to the formation of a new political law, to the effect that sensible leaders should avoid placing any reliance on helicopters (here comes a chopper to chop off your head).

But despite the capacity of the post-1983 Thatcher government to boldly slide where none has slid before, and notwithstanding the apparent continuum between the agonies of the 'hapless' Mr Jenkin and those of the 'beleaguered' Mr Brittan — the elements of innocent incompetence in the Westland affair are not its most important feature, even if the truth of things is akin to Ferdinand Mount's explanation, that she didn't ask merely because she didn't want to hear the answer.

'Like Richard III, the lady is obviously motivated by an ambition bordering on lust; unlike Richard, she is also fired by a more ancient urge: revenge.'

And even if it was cock-up rather than conspiracy, it would not provide an appropriate snake for Thatcherism's final slide. It is perhaps right that the 'most extraordinarily able' Mr Brittan should be hoist by his own hamfistedness, and reduced, in one of the most painful visual images of the affair, to a kind of clockwork toy, endlessly shifting his mechanical grin from side to side, in the manner of those jerky tape-loops so beloved of the makers of scratch videos and the title sequence of *Not the Nine O'Clock News*. But for herself, incompetence alone could not turn the most precipitate *catastasis* to catastrophe.

A MUCH CLOSER analogy is provided, of course, by Watergate (by the above token, Rule Two should be about avoiding double-barrelled bucolicisms beginning with W). It is now more or less forgotten that the famous White House 'Plumbers' unit was initially set up, in consequence of various inter-departmental dirty dealings, to plug leaks. In consequence of their creation (and certain 'misunderstandings' about who was authorising whom to do what), a particularly underhand dirty trick was pulled, which differed in degree rather than kind from similar dishonesties performed by employees of previous administrations, and which was initially dismissed as a petty, trivial, and indeed 'third rate' escapade.

Following the discovery of the full extent of the government's involvement in this incident, a strenuous effort was mounted to cover it up, an effort which enmeshed increasingly senior members of the administration in the affair. Following partial exposure of these machinations in the newspapers, a series of unsatisfactory statements was issued, at least one of which detailed the 'findings' of a 'report' which had been commissioned in retrospect, reported belatedly, and concerned itself with matters which the person who ordered it might be expected to have known about already.

Finally, a committee of the legislature was set up, which brought the forensic skills of a number of hitherto relatively unknown politicians to the public attention, and which heard evidence from many (though not all) of the public servants involved, as to the question of when their employer knew what and from whom. Some of them stonewalled, others were skilfully obfusc — and indeed only the absence of a major revelation, the messenger from Corinth, the can-of-worms spiller of John Deanian proportions, corrupts the analogy.

But to list the points of comparison between Watergate and Westland is to expose the differences. It is true that there was something almost painfully delicious about poor Mr Tom King, presumably unconsciously echoing Richard Nixon's famous adjuration that it wasn't so bad that these things happened, what was really bad was when you covered them up. Nor can any Watergate *aficianado* have escaped a sense of déjà vu as Leon Brittan (cast against type as John Ehrlichman) stubbornly resisted the diligent efforts of Dr John Gilbert (doubling in this case the parts of Senators Ervin and Weicker) to wheedle it out of him. But even if there is a faint echo, in Sir Michael Havers's blandly euphemistic 'material inaccuracies', of Ron Zeigler's famous admission that 'all previous statements are inoperative', then it must be acknowledged that those inaccuracies were of a different order, the 'misunderstandings' of smaller magnitude, the 'misleading' on a lesser scale. Ms Collette Bowe did not commit an

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act of burglary, Bernard Ingham did not pay off crooks, and no one was offered executive clemency (in poor Leon's case, far from it).

But even as a miniature (for, after all, a 'material inaccuracy' remains a material inaccuracy) the Westland affair is not another Watergate, for the same reason that there is only coincidental parity between Mrs Thatcher and President Carter's brushes with the inadequacies of certain branches of aeronautic technology. Watergate brought down Richard Nixon because it was a completely appropriate crime (or cluster of crimes) for the man: as a large number of earlier victims of Nixonian political hardball (from Jerry Voorhis and Helen Gahagan Douglas to Alger Hiss) queued up to testify.

Nixon began his career with speeches of melodramatic sentimentality and against jibes about used cars: as he tearfully bid the White House staff goodbye, with meandering quotations from past Presidents and maudlin references to his mother, it was obviously the Used Car salesman's farewell.

One cannot imagine Mrs Thatcher incoherently lecturing the Garden Room Girls on the saintly qualities of Mrs Roberts (though on the topic of Mr Roberts things might be different). There are elements of the Thatcher personality that have been exposed by the affair: the maliciousness, the pugnaciousness, and, in some respects (as commentators have pointed out), the weaknesses and misplaced loyalties too. But with one exception, there is no great flaw, exposed by the events of the last weeks, that could (or in dramatic terms, should) suitably and appropriately bring this particular personage to fall, in Chaucer's definition, from the 'greet prosperitee' of 'heigh degree' into 'wrecched myserie'.

DURING WATERGATE, I wrote a parody play about the Nixon White House, based on *Richard III*. It was not until the affair was over, and it was possible to look back through those mountains of material, and particularly the transcripts of the speeches and the tapes, that I realised the mistake I'd made. The plot of Richard fitted so closely it almost squeaked: with the destroyed Democratic hopefuls as the smothered princes, Hastings as poor, bumbling, scapegoated John Mitchell, Buckingham as the fanatically loyal, but nonetheless betrayed, Bob Haldeman.

What was wrong, again, was the protagonist: the very *point* of Richard is his cynical self-knowledge, his gleeful consciousness of his own wickedness; whereas the most striking thing about the Watergate affair was the success with which Nixon progressively deluded *himself* (by the end, to a point of exclusivity) about what he knew and when he'd known it.

At first, it seemed that Westland might be Margaret Thatcher's Bosworth, with the really quite substantial ghostly chorus of the sacrificed — late joined by the thrice-perjured Heseltine — sitting heavy on her sleeping soul. But while there are elements of the character of Crouchback that accord with She of the Wintry Discontent, in this case it is the action that is wanting. For if the Thatcher story has within it the shape and structure of a kind of tragedy, then it is a tragedy of a very specific genre. Like Richard, the lady is obviously motivated by an ambition bordering on lust. Unlike Richard, however, but in company with a large number of tragic protagonists, it seems to me obvious that she is also fired by an even more ancient, even atavistic urge: revenge.

For what sets both Mrs Thatcher and her *ism* apart from all previous post-war manifestations of Conservatism is her and its conscious project of reaction, pursued as it has been with all the passion and vigour associated with an act of personal vengeance. In small ways, she has sought not just to undermine but to humiliate those groups whose power and influence she is dedicated to eliminate — obviously, the trade unions, but also the social pressure groups, the sociology departments, the town hall spenders, the 'liberal establishment'. On a larger scale, she sought quite consciously to expiate the loss of Suez in the Falklands, and to avenge the closure of Saltley at the very gates of Orgreave. In one sense, the defeat of the miners was a greater matter even than the final resting of Sir Anthony's ghost — there she was wreaking vengeance not only on the miners, but the craven fainthearts of her own party, and in a sense herself.

And finally, having demolished the post-war economic consensus, and gloated over the tortured cries of all those once-so-haughty Keynesians, having seen off the squatters and replaced the often scorned, bourgeois virtues on their proper pedestal, she and her acolytes have loosed their vengeful fury on the 60s shibboleths of liberalism and 'permissiveness', to reassert the ancient social certainties (and prohibitions) in their stead.

So how, then, do revengers fall? (*Hamlet* itself — a revenge play with a totally inadequate protagonist — is obviously no help to us.) What happens, of course, is that in the madness of the chase, they become infected by the very evils they are seeking to avenge. Political defectors provide an unusually clear example of this corruption: as they set about spending the second half of their lives in a conscious act of revenge against the first, carrying over into their new political terrain the very worst of what they'd claimed they'd run away from (there is none more brutally authoritarian, nor as cynically manipulative, as an ex-Stalinist). For Thatcherism, equally, the end can only fit into the grand arc of its progress, from the trumpet of the freedom of the individual, to the most resolute apologist for conformity, obligation, social discipline and central rule. There has of course been at least one incident — the matter of the General Belgrano — which could (and should) have exposed and threatened the entire Thatcherite endeavour. But there is nothing in the grubby labyrinth of Westland of anything like sufficient scale.

WELL, NEARLY NOTHING. There is perhaps one aspect of the business which speaks not merely to the specific case but to the project as a whole. It is has been asserted by government supporters that every government has used anonymous leaks as a political mechanism, and that the distinction between the normal run of such leaks and the public dissemination of the advice of a law officer is so fine as to be mere sophistry. This may be (and probably is) true, but what is also true is that those governments have not by and large chosen to treat the public as a group of naughty schoolchildren, and to govern on the basis of the pokerwork motto and the nursery moralism. It is *this* government that has spent the last year, for instance, shaking its finger at the teachers, and accusing them of 'setting a bad example' (another of the phrases now handed about the cabinet like a relay baton). And it is also *this* government that has set such a publicly high premium on the integrity of government information that it has jailed one and tried to jail another of its civil servants for the infringement of its privacy. So when *this* government is found with its mucky paws in the cookie jar, it really cannot turn round and complain that big bro did the same.

It is in short Thatcherism's *hypocrisy* that has been exposed by the Westland affair, not, certainly, Coriolanian hubris, nor Hamletian impotence, nor even the Revenger's deterioration, but rather the Angelo syndrome, the seemingly incorruptible paragon found with his hand up the virgin's skirt. It is clearly enough to dirty the gleam, and the lady herself may eventually succumb. But as for the *ism*, it is not enough. A defeat is needed of a size commensurate with its victories: a reversal equivalent to those suffered by the miners. As the journalists scurry through Wapping's high tech Checkpoint Charlies, as the printers are left alone to face the courts, perhaps, after all, it will be those very teachers, whose patient, tenacious, intelligent and thoroughly *adult* campaign has done so much to undermine the nannyish bluster of the Cabinet's self-appointed martinets, who will provoke the final crisis and the ultimate denouement. □

David Edgar's latest work of non-fiction is published in The Ideology of the New Right, *ed. Ruth Levitas, Polity Press 1986.*

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Nanny knows best

Sara Maitland

Beyond Power: Women Men and Morals
MARILYN FRENCH *Cape* £15

Marilyn French — platonic idealist

ANGELA CARTER once described *The Women's Room*, Marilyn French's international best-selling novel, as an etiquette book; 'really an instruction manual for the older woman post-graduate student' whose purpose is 'to teach people how to behave in social circles to which they think they might be able to aspire'. In *Beyond Power* French has extended this role to embrace the whole of history and under her firm and nannyish wing we can all learn better manners and move towards more gracious living, especially the boys who are always 'naturally' too rough.

Well I was taught my manners by a nanny and I don't altogether knock the process: good manners are indeed an aid to gracious living (called 'felicity' by French, and her great ideal) and God knows there is little enough of that around at the moment. Like French my Nanny also patently loved her charges, wanted well for them, taught them to respect their Mother and was, above all, thorough — 'no stone unturned' and 'a job worth doing is worth doing well' and so on.

But, like most good nannies, French sees things simply. We're all in the mess we are because men want power and have it while women don't and haven't. (I should say that I tend to agree with quite a lot of this incidentally.) So she falls back, rather derivatively, on the feminist version of patriarchal history, and takes the reader through a long and immaculate tour of the Great Feminist Moments — once upon a time there was a wonderful society that was matricentral (loved mummy), matrifocal and matrilineal; then nasty old fathers messed things up and everything has been horrid ever since (if this reminds you of the morality of Barrie's *Peter Pan* it isn't my fault). In fairness to French she brings her basic good sense to the subject and manages to solve a problem that this particular version of history has always been dogged by — if matricentred power is so, so wonderful and unoppressive why should men wish to overthrow it? French suggests rather cleverly that it was precisely the leisure that the system gave them that allowed men the chance to abstract, to think 'transcendently', to distance themselves from the daily present tense and to create the concept of 'spirituality' over against 'nature' out of their own sense of marginality.

I can't help feeling that this is an attempt to make history conform to the discipline of depth psychology, a discipline which grows out of the Enlightenment and which French attacks on precisely that ground. The connection remains dubious, at least to me. I don't even want to say that she is descriptively wrong: the broad sweep of radical feminist pre-history is at least as satisfactory as other speculative models — in fact it is better, more pleasing aesthetically and more reasonable intellectually — but it is equally irrelevant.

This pre-historical model is not pleasure seeking, it is not the present-tense delight-in-itself which French argues that all knowledge should be, it is rather designed to authorise the conviction that if women were in charge again everything would be all right. Because underneath all the historical description French is idealist — I don't mean idealistic, I mean platonic: although she gives a proper nod in the direction of 'social conditioning' she really believes that this conditioning is like a blanket wrapped around a pure nugget of truth called 'femininity' — strip off the blanket and there She is, Eternal Woman waiting to be discovered. In the old version (Aquinas's) She is illogical, sensual, natural, pliable and therefore inferior; in French's version she is illogical, sensual, natural, pliable and therefore superior; but both believe the same thing, the Essential Woman. But I don't believe a word of it; I can't actually afford to believe a word of it because it is a political dead end: of course I believe in biological difference, but I don't believe in gender in any ontological sense. It is only if we believe that gender is socially constructed within history that we can believe that it is possible to deconstruct and — more importantly — reconstruct it within history.

On these shaky foundations French builds a marvellous edifice; it is detailed, self-assured, committed and complex; she has worked hard and her sources are impressively wide-ranging and far-reaching; every corner of contemporary society is examined and, although I think she is generous towards liberal individualism and ungenerous towards socialism, I do not question her good will and her thoroughness. But like the false prophets of the bible I feel that she 'cries "Peace, Peace" and there is no peace', because her faith is without foundation. Her analysis cannot really address, that is change, actual realities, as she herself admits: after 484 pages she comes clean — 'The major problem facing feminists can easily be summed up: there is no clear right way to move.' (This sense of despair is not in itself necessarily incorrect, it is just that French takes 546 pages of text, plus another 100 of scholarly notation to arrive there, which is oddly uncomfortable from someone who claims to despise 'The Word').

And finally her book reminded me of my Nanny in yet one more way; she also went on and on saying things with great detail and great conviction and was in the end extremely boring.

Tale of two nations

Dilip Hiro

The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran
ROY MOTTAHEDEH *Chatto* £12.95

TO UNDERSTAND the Iranian revolution

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one needs to comprehend the Islamic culture and heritage of Iran. Roy Parviz Mottahedeh, a teacher of medieval Middle East history and the Persian and Arabic languages at Princeton University, goes a long way to imparting that understanding. This is an innovative work on Iranian culture, the Shiite clergy today leading the revolutionary state and the theological colleges, *madressehs*, which have spawned them.

Mottahedeh shows how, to avoid the wrath of their tyrannical rulers, Iranians turned increasingly to poetry to express themselves, making it 'the central icon of their culture, the focus of emotion in which every speaker of Persian has felt that he or she could see something essential to himself or herself'. He dwells on the Iranian love of ambiguity and traces it to the tension between Iran's two histories: Islamic and pre-Islamic.

The author contrives a refreshingly original way of narrating history. He creates a fictitious central figure, Ali Hashemi, born in 1943, and relates his life story, juxtaposing it with historical essays on religion, theological and secular education, leading thinkers and reformers and major political events. So deep is Mottahedeh's scholarship, and so lucid his style, that the pieces fit perfectly, and the narrative at both personal and social levels moves forward in perfect harmony.

Ali Hashemi, born in Qom, a renowned centre of Shiite learning, arrives at a *madresseh* from a state-run elementary school. Secular education originated in Iran in the mid-19th century as a result of the need the Qajar kings felt to centralise the state and to impart Western military and technical skills to their subjects. Hence secular education in Iran remained, in the author's words, 'a creature of the barracks, with its emphasis on order and marching, and its brute, physical punishments'.

The *madressehs*, which tenaciously preserved their old textbooks and methods of teaching, became centres of orthodoxy. They deeply resented the inroads that Westernisation and industrialisation – encouraged by the Pahlavis who took over from the Qajars in 1926 – made into traditional Iranian life.

From the 1930s Iran's political and religious realms existed separately 'in peaceful coexistence'. This was disturbed briefly by popular agitations in the early 1950s and 1963 in which clerics participated. But it was, in the final analysis, Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi who destroyed the equilibrium by mounting, in October 1971, a preposterously lavish show at Persepolis to celebrate 2,500 years of monarchy stretching back to Cyrus the Great. By exalting the pre-Islamic past at the expense of the Islamic present the Shah destroyed the traditional Iranian ambiguity and set in train an Islamic backlash which caused his downfall in February 1979.

Since Ali Hashemi is of liberal persuasion, a man of restraint and tolerance, he finds himself unable to participate in the militancy and violence of the Islamic revolution. 'Ali's companions think it ironical that Ali, who had once burned with a fire of fellow-feeling for the Algerians (in their revolutionary struggle), has steadfastly resisted the flame of the new revolution,' conclûdes the author with barely disguised irony. □

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FICTION

Dreamchildren

Richard Deveson

Tefuga
PETER DICKINSON *Bodley Head* £9.95
Nowhere
THOMAS BERGER *Methuen* £9.50
Acts of Faith
HANS KONING *Gollancz* £8.95
The Canberran
RUPERT PARSONS *Hamish Hamilton* £10.95

PETER DICKINSON only has to write three lines and his heroine is there: 'Our house. It's called The Warren. Ted chose that 'cos he calls me Rabbit when he's being fond — not terribly tactful, but *very* Teddish.' Betty Jackland is writing her diary. It is 1923, and she has just come out to Africa for the first time to join her new husband, a District Officer in remote northern Nigeria. If **Tefuga** were merely a portrait of Betty — a bright-eyed, innocent yet responsive girl hardly out of school, who has to get to know both her 'dear man' Ted and an unencountered new continent — its sympathy and authenticity would be arresting enough. But there is far more to the story than this. We are still only in February, but I doubt if a better new novel will be published during the rest of the year.

Betty teaches her houseboy English and begins to learn the language of the local Kitawa; she gets 'permish' from the Hausa Emir to paint and sketch inside his palace, not realising that her pictures are going to work powerful magic; learning that there is trouble between the Kitawa and the Hausa, she decides to try to do something for the Kitawa women who seem to be the victims. But she finds herself caught in a form of political disloyalty to the decent but unimaginative Ted, even though her motive is to make him feel he needs her. Her intercessions in the affairs of men, British and African, help her to find herself but also help provoke a bloody tribal Incident. 'S**' discloses its possibilities, but the African climate wreaks havoc with the rubber of her 'thingy', she becomes pregnant and, since babies are proscribed under the terms of Ted's posting, she has to go home to England, with further catastrophic consequences.

The story told through Betty's diary is amplified and placed in relief by a story, set in the present, of Betty's son's filming of the original events. Perhaps these chapters are less compelling than Betty's own, but they serve to contrast two versions of Western intervention in Nigerian animism and militarised corruption, and they intensify a poetry in the oscillation between myth and reality that is sustained to the very last sentence. What actually happened? Was it what rational, uncomprehending British dispassion believed happened? How far did Betty's entry into the collective dream-visions of the Kitawa women contribute to the final catastrophes? This is a rich and remarkable work of the imagination.

Nowhere is rather a let-down after Thomas Berger's last novel, *The Feud*. Russel Wren, Berger's clueless private investigator, is kidnapped by 'The Firm' and dispatched to the hideaway Central European principality of Saint Sebastian to spy on its princeling and its Liberation Front and to see whether it needs to be saved for democracy. The country turns out to be a second cousin of Lehár's Pontevedro, or perhaps of Tintin's Syldavia with sex. Hotel concierges in wing collars and tails offer the services of young boys. Blonde women are permanently available, like 24-hour vendomats. Wren discovers that the prince is an infantile gormandiser whose brilliantined, thin-moustachioed officers run the court like a despotic day nursery. Ambition, money and power have been abolished in Saint Sebastian; lawyers, politicians and journalists are social outcasts; books have virtually died out, apart from the national encyclopedia, which is full of invented rubbish; children spend all day in the cinema, watching wholesome 1940s films in which square-jawed G-men end up falling for their partners' cute kid sisters.

None of this is as comic as it's meant to be. Berger's manner is like *Gulliver* with one-liners, but where is the book's satire coming *from*? He doesn't seem to have decided whether or not he's really interested in presenting a life without greed, envy, money and news as a Lilliputian foil to modern New York. The land of smiles becomes absurd and self-defeating, and Wren begins to sound positively homesick for his Manhattan muggers and defecating dogs. And, despite all the jokes, there is an aftertaste of cantankerous anti-Europeanism, a resentment of our backwardness and ingratitude, that is slightly unpleasant.

Hans Koning's **Acts of Faith** offers another New York, a city of soundless, starkly-lit interiors that convey the sense of unplaceable brooding caught in the paintings of Edward Hopper. A man gets entangled with a group of Spaniards who seem to be part of a conspiracy that looks back beyond Franco to the Counter-Reformation and ahead to some sort of world nuclear cataclysm. The trouble is that, although conspiracy may sometimes turn out to be cock-up, it may also be paranoiac cock-and-bull, and this harassed librarian is clearly suffering from psychopathic waking

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nightmares. But that fact undermines what seems to be the whole point of Koning's intensely readable allegory, which is to alarm us about the all-too-real possibility of nuclear disaster.

The Canberran is a rhapsodic, powerfully written yet decidedly strange first novel all about a gang of men laying rails in the middle of the heat and red dust of the Australian Nullarbor Desert. They are men of few words, except obscene ones, and they spend most of their leisure hours playing cards, drinking, fighting and going mad. Nothing else happens, at great length. I have to say that Rupert Parsons made me newly grateful for my wife, children and S-registration Ford Escort. □

PAPERBACKS

All the people like us

Alan Brien

THERE'S THESE filthy rich Pakis, right, come here to get richer. Anyway, back home, the mad mullahs don't let them have any fun with their money, do they? No sex, no booze, no dope, no nightclubs.

What they do? Here, they drive big cars. Drink champagne. Live in stately homes. Sleep with our women. Oh, for earners? Well, buy up old houses, chuck out squatters, change locks, charge a fortune. Bit of drugs on a side, smuggled in beneath grand-dad's grey beard. Anybody objects, send round a few rented nignogs or white kids offa dole. Their motto – always make the others do the dirty jobs.

Our lads? Well, they hate Pakis the way Pakis hate us. But they only like, shout and shake a fist. Even the tough kid, got kicked out of a squat when he was ill, he doesn't even try very hard to stop his best mate being screwed by this young Paki pufter. Not until the young Paki pufter's uncle's business partner gets drunk, runs down one of the gang in his big car, breaks his leg. Well, after that, the gang smash the car and the tough kid gives the uncle's partner a good hiding with a stick with nails in it. I mean, it is *our* country. Oh, then the Old Bill come and that's the end. Slice of life, OK? Way we live now, see.

This will be recognised (I hope) by those who have seen the film as the plot of Hanif Kureishi's **My Beautiful Laundrette**, script just out in Faber paperback (£3.95). I have not seen the film, but I must register a mild complaint about my former close colleagues in the dark. Perhaps I do not read cinema reviews as closely as I did when I was also writing them, but it seems to me I was never prepared for the audacity, the sheer kick-in-the-guts shock, incorporated in such a contemporary tale.

In re-telling it, I have reversed the p-o-v, so that the events are seen through the eyes of the white skinhead rather than the brown patrician. But everything I described occurs, at least in the script. Could such a portrait of Pakistanis in Britain have been screened without protests and pickets if its author had been a known white racist? I am certain no gentile, of whatever colour, would succeed in bringing an equivalent panorama of a Jewish dynasty to the screen. Would a Jew be willing to show his own relatives conforming to parallel anti-Semitic stereotypes? And if not, how can Hanif Kureishi do so with his family look-alikes?

Part of the answer must be that he has had the *chutzpah* to strike while the irony is hot. We can all handle 'A Modest Proposal' or 'A Short Way with Dissenters' now it has had a long pause to cool off. *My Beautiful Laundrette* is a rare example of genuinely painful satire, masquerading as fanciful comedy-thriller, that deserves mention in the same breath, though more Defoe-esque than Swiftian. One of several disturbing demands it thrusts upon us is this: so these Pakistani landlords are callous, businessmen semi-crooked, husbands spend-thrift and unfaithful, wives superstitious, journalists incontinent and alcoholic, heirs mercenary and gay — does this make 'Pakis' more, or less, like us?

In the essay, 'The Rainbow Sign', which is included with the script, Kureishi analyses and illustrates the points which are somewhat hidden under the meringue of entertainment in the film. It is a vivid, witty and penetrating piece. Particularly worthwhile is his insistence that Orwell's England of mild, tolerant, knobbly-faced workers, where rubber truncheons and Jew-baiting were unimaginable, has gone forever.

Everything by V.S. Pritchett is worth reading. But the Hogarth reprint of his topographical musings from 1962, **London Perceived** (£3.95), echoes today to the sound of barrel-scraping. The physical descriptions are still brilliantly evocative, more of moods than appearances, but the appreciation of the Londoners themselves was already a bit misty. Four years after the Notting Hill riots (white attacks on blacks, remember), the claim that the people are now 'a hundred times more tolerant and civilised' than in Thirties rings regrettably hollow.

All England, though particularly London and Londoners, took a severe caning for its puffed-up opinion of itself from Edmund Wilson in **Europe Without Baedeker** (Hogarth, £4.95). I recall reading it on its first publication here in 1948 and warming to this mid-Atlantic Dr Johnson for his robust refusal to make more than token allowance for such irrelevances as five years of war. He was right to proclaim that *Bleak House* and *The Way of All Flesh* were not half-mythical tales but 'true pictures of English society'.

No one, not even Shaw or Orwell, has produced a more accurate and damning list of basic English qualities – 'the passion for social privilege, the rapacious appetite for property, the egoism that damns one's neighbour, the dependence on inherited advantages and the almost equally deep-fibred instinct, often not deliberate or conscious, to make all these appear forms of virtue'.

I am, however, no longer quite so sure these are exclusively upper-class convictions, though Wilson did seem to move only among the *haute monde* or the literary establishment. (Typically, one of his sources was a French prostitute who spoke no English.) There is no doubt of his slavish devotion to the cause of exactitude – his marvellous collection of short stories, **Memoirs of Hecate County** (Hogarth, £3.95) bruises the reader with its determination to get *everything* right.

His sexual descriptions, which had the book prosecuted in the US, have a closeness to clinically observed detail that can seem positively Leonardo Da Vincian. They are certainly not erotic, given, as John Updike in his 'Afterword' rightly notes, to recurrent use of such words as 'meaty'. Perhaps for that reason, they remain closer to actual experience of real lovers than the more electrifying reportage of pornographers or poets, or those

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who combine a bit of both, like Updike.

Wilson's pioneering in this department has not always had a useful effect on his followers — notably Norman Mailer. In **Tough Guys Don't Dance** (Sphere, £2.50), Mailer, as usual, comes near to breaking a blood vessel describing everything. But it is the female body which arouses the competitiveness in him most dangerously. In the course of this rather blundering thriller, he remarks 'the best description of a pussy I ever came across was in a short piece by John Updike called "One's Neighbour's Wife"' and he quotes some 200 words of it. Naturally, he then produces his own rival entry for the award. But the harder he tries the deeper he embeds himself. I disqualified him at 'how her ooze would pullulate in reply'. Mailer is a great novelist — if you read all he writes except his novels.

Any fear that Samuel Butler's **Notebooks** (Hogarth, £3.95) are dated or merely whimsical must have been dispelled by the way, the day after they were re-issued, journalists all over town were citing, and getting wrong, his dictum about eating a bunch of grapes from the top. Out of the dozens of thoughts I treasure, I particularly enjoy the notes for *Erewhon Revisited*:

> They consider 'wilful procreation', as they call it, much as we do murder . . . Sometimes a jury will recommend to mercy and sometimes they bring in a verdict of 'justifiable baby-getting' but they treat these cases as a rule with great severity. □

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Invitation to the dance

Gillian Wilce

Genuine Fake: A Biography of Alan Watts

MONICA FURLONG *Heinemann* £12.95

THOSE OF US who, in Monica Furlong's beguiling opening words, 'still take pleasure in the period that came between postwar conservativism and the resurgence of the moral majority in the late 1970s' may well have on our shelves one or other of Alan Watts's books about Zen Buddhism. He was, in fact, a leading Western populariser of Zen long before the Sixties caught him up and turned him into 'a revered figure', 'a strong influence on hippy culture'.

Born in 1915 in Chislehurst, only child of older parents both from strict Protestant families, he converted to Buddhism while in the sixth form at King's School, Canterbury, refused to go to university on the grounds that he could better educate himself and wrote his first book about Zen at the age of 19. Marriage took him to the USA where life in Manhattan was followed by six years as an Anglican priest in Chicago; this ended in sexual scandal and a broken marriage; then a second marriage, a time of withdrawal, a move west, teaching at the American Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco, more books, more children, another divorce, a feverish round of lecture tours to keep up with financial obligations, a third, enduring marriage, the coming of the Counter Culture, LSD, guru status, alcoholism, Taoism and a relatively early death — 'checked out' at the age of 58.

Even so bare and hasty a listing of some features of his life implies that it was appropriate for the book's title (his own words) to suggest contradiction. He was made of paradoxes which he expressed in the form of ideas that reached not just the minds but the needs of readers and audiences. In her introduction, Monica Furlong touches lightly on Watts as exemplar of the 'trickster hero', far from the first religious leader/thinker to inspire others while leaving a trail of personal damage, inspiriting and maddening all at once. But she does not labour the point.

Clear sighted about his failings without being either exculpatory or judgmental, she is matter of fact, for example, about his 'drinking and fornicating all over California', though she never belittles the effects of his behaviour on other people, children included. The nearest she comes to overt censoriousness is a 'twinge of cynicism' about his becoming a clergyman for a range of reasons which did not include Christian conviction.

It is a lively story lucidly and economically told — a mere couple of hundred words catch the feel of a meeting with Jung during which the two men discussed the mating habits of swans — and, at the same time, it is impeccably modest and true to its sources: the voices of family and friends speak clearly through the book, as does that of Watts himself, and his biographer never succumbs to the temptation to tie up ends or impose explanations. There is a recurrent motif, for instance, of Watts's mother as a problem in his life, evocative of 'distressing feelings', but Monica Furlong does not presume to know better than he did himself why these feelings came to be or what effect they had on his life — or on his thought. For she never loses sight of the teachings that turned him into a public persona. A judicious account of his attitudes and thinking (in both their changing and their constancy) is as integral to the book as that intellectual and spiritual life was to the being of Alan Watts. □

Among this week's contributors:

Alan Brien *Lenin: The Novel* will be published by Heinemann this September.

Dilip Hiro is the author of *Iran under the Ayatollahs* (Routledge).

Sara Maitland's most recent novel was *Virgin Territory* (Michael Joseph).

Donny O'Rourke writes regularly about folk music for the *Glasgow Herald* and is a reporter for Scottish TV.

Judith Williamson's *Consuming Passions: The Dynamics of Popular Culture* will be published by Marion Boyars later this month.

Bas-relief

Michael Goldfarb

Truman

ROY JENKINS *Collins* £12.95

DESPITE THE NUMBER of volumes already available, it is easy to understand the fascination Harry S. Truman continues to hold for ordinary biographers, much more biographer/politicians like Roy Jenkins.

No modern US president's reputation has fluctuated as much as Truman's and no president's record and personality are more difficult to reduce to a buzzword or catch phrase. There are several reasons for the difficulties in pinning a label on the elusive Truman.

First, there is no clear-cut consensus about the success of the policies that were enacted during his presidency. Professional cold warriors value his role in establishing NATO. The increasingly strong anti-nuclear lobby looks aghast at his decision to drop the bomb twice. The concept of a united Western Europe, first bruited during his presidency, is a fact but in constant peril from parochial, political pressures.

Second, he presided over a period of massive

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anti-climax. One minute the world was at war. The next minute the bomb dropped. The minute after that millions of people were in bed trying to wipe the charnel house memories away by creating new life. Certainly in the US people weren't paying too close attention to what was going on in Washington.

Jenkins describes this in a marvellous anecdote depicting Truman returning to Washington in November 1946 after the disastrous mid-term Congressional elections. The Republicans have swept away the Democrats in Congress, kicking Roosevelt and the New Deal down the greased skid of history. When Truman arrives at Union Station there is no brass band, no crowd of reporters, no sycophantic staff waiting for him. Only a solitary figure — Dean Acheson — has made the effort to greet the leader of what is coming to be known as the Free World. It is hard to imagine a Ronald Reagan or even a Jimmy Carter returning to D.C. after an electoral disaster with such lack of fanfare.

Third, Truman really was a complex character. In the US he is revered as a plain-speaking man of the people. Plain speaking is true. But he was not a populist by any means. His attitude toward unions was about the same as Rupert Murdoch's. He was a machine politician who drank and played poker with his Kansas City cronies regardless of the office he held. Yet he was clever enough to surround himself with statesmen like George Marshall and Dean Acheson. He was also mean-spirited and quite willing to sick the FBI on original New Dealers who he felt undercut his authority, justifying to his diary, 'No professional liberal is intellectually honest.'

Jenkins's briskly written, readable biography touches all these bases with a concentration on the Truman record internationally. Jenkins gives Truman high marks for the establishment of NATO and for allowing General Marshall a free hand as Secretary of State.

He narrates in an objective style, only occasionally marking ironies about the man, e.g. although Truman felt uncomfortable around the patrician Roosevelt crowd he quite preferred the patrician Churchill to Attlee; he had a 'happy capacity to act more wisely than he spoke or wrote'.

It would have been nice if he had included a bit more material on Truman's Missouri origins. Missouri is a unique state, not entirely southern, northern or midwestern; not entirely rural or industrial. It spawned Jesse James and Mark Twain and its inhabitants are known for a cussed streak of stubborn independence. Truman was a son of his native soil.

The book doesn't place Truman's reputation in any new light. Jenkins seems to agree off-handedly with a *New York Times* poll of historians that ranks Truman among the near-great presidents.

A more definitive understanding of Truman's presidency may have to wait a few years. Too many of the players who were present when the rules of the post-war game were set out are still sitting at the table. They will have to pass from the scene before a real understanding of the Truman years emerges. □

FILMS: 1

Close encounter of a Polish kind

John Coleman

Doomed lovers Norman (Scott Wilson) and Emilia (Maja Komorowska) in Quiet Sun.

Year of the Quiet Sun (15)
ICA
Mr Love (15)
Warner West End: Cannon, Tottenham Court Road
Crazy Family (18)
Metro One
Commando (18)
Prince Charles; various Odeons and Cannons; London release

IN HIS PROVOCATIVE and intelligent *The Story of the Lost Reflection* — my *NS* book for Christmas — Paul Coates proposed that the best films of a fine, often cryptic Polish director, Krzysztof Zanussi, 'deal with intimate encounters, and their mood is ascetic, non-committal, a hovering before choice'. Certainly Zanussi's **Year of the Quiet Sun** which picked up Venice's top award in 1984, tallies tidily enough with this description, with its implication of a certain indecisiveness not merely built into the characters themselves (the compromised folk of *The Contract*, the mountaineering fantasist of *The Constant Factor)* but also felt as part of their creator's private and personal emotional baggage.

In the stressful nature of things, any East European movie likely to find favour in the West will carry its freight of ambiguities and indirections: Wajda has had recourse to hints and symbols. Zanussi, though, has generally gone further than his compatriots in his tormented subversions — and it is possibly the knowledge of this which marks his latest film down as in a minor key, yes, but relatively minor, too, in the Zanussi canon; a chamber piece.

So much established, credit where it is due. This sombre occasion, set back in the war-ravaged Europe of 1946, tells an affecting story of ill-fated love between strangers: a Polish widow Emilia (staunch Maja Komorowska), caring for her formidable, ailing mother in a dingy flat somewhere in bleak territory reclaimed from Germany; and the loner American soldier, Norman (Scott Wilson, investing affection's stumbling clichés with a vulnerable nobility), whose gift-bearing persistence and decency finally win over the woman.

He has volunteered to stay on as investigator into a war crime (the gruesome disinterment of blackened bodies of some pilots from a mass grave on a plain): Emilia ekes out a living by making pastries for a local queue-beset bakery. Their bizarre first encounter occurs when Norman stops to pee by a derelict car in which she sits, unnoticed, pursuing her hobby of painting. Throughout, black humour jostles black deeds, though it is Emilia who steadfastly personifies a kind of moral greyness, befriending an ex-concentration-camp prostitute-neighbour (whose main client and hope is a shifty German), rallying after unspecified yobboes attack her and mama and vandalise their room in search of valuables, shrugging off threats from a slimy Party official-in-embryo when she seems set to go with Norman to become an American farmer's wife.

For this projected escape is at the heart of the matter, which has progressed from the mother-and-daughter's helpless merriment, as Norman struggles to communicate via phrase-book and mirthless interpreter, into acceptance and a difficult affair. The stoic mother's condition worsens, she secretly empties a syringe of Norman-procured penicillin, she will not make that transatlantic voyage. Nor, either, will Emilia. A marvellously conceived romantic coda finds her old herself, dream-dancing with Norman as he was (and as they once *had* whirled in a

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tatty hall) in a great, barren landscape. She has indeed 'hovered before choice', settling — one assumes — for her Polishness against new-found-land happiness, surrendering her ticket to that prostitute. There is a lot of quiet power and tenderness in this excellently played doomed collision of Yank and widow-woman. There is also a troubling sense of some larger message not finding its expression. Did Emilia truly love loyal Norman? Is it, after all, the tug of patriotism that holds her back? Questions are begged and they hang on in the mind, destructively, as important ones.

For a thoroughly genial little British entertainment, the sort — one must confess — that could as well be accommodated by a TV screen, visit Roy Battersby's **Mr Love,** jokily scripted by Kenneth Eastaugh and turning on the posthumous (and ironically unearned) commercial canonisation of 50-year-old Donald (Barry Jackson), a Southport municipal gardener, as Casanova extra-ordinary. Working back from his funeral, at which his dowdy wife is outraged to note a gaggle of unknown women present, it shows how this gentle, balding fellow worm-turned late in life, realising he has never been loved. A series of 'conquests' follows, none of which is what it appears: Lucy, who is crazy for spiders; the Pink Lady, who displays her unexpected treasures; the seaside town's prostitute's unmarried daughter, whose totty he baby-sits; and a would-be-actress cinema usherette (superb Julia Deakin) with whom Donald, part-time projectionist as well, enacts an hilarious Bogart-and-Bergman scene from *Casablanca* on-stage when the film breaks down. Maurice Denham passes through as Donald's trampish counsellor and chum; a statue of Queen Victoria crashes down on a car, to ensure Donald's immortality; the flavour of the place (pier, mini-train, red dawns) pungently adds to the fun, which at its more inspired moments recalls the hey-day of Ealing.

Recommended viewing

A regular selection by our critic from films still doing the rounds

Streetwise Shattering *ciné-vérité* walk on wild side of Seattle. Gritty look-and-listen impressions of nine street adolescents, into prostitution, drugs, scams and suicide, with appalling asides from delinquent parents. Directed by Englishman Martin Bell: *at* whom and for whose benefit? Take your caveats with you.

Dreamchild Carroll-Dodgson's Alices — fictions, fantasy and fact — collide in scintillating cinema first for Gavin Millar, polishing every facet of original Dennis Potter script. Old Mrs Hargreaves, née Liddell (superb Coral Browne), has bad, lyric, macabre 1932 centenary NY trip, memory's whirligig halting on late-learned love (Ian Holm, Amelia Shankley).

A Chorus Line Richard Attenborough's valiantly rewarded and rewarding shot at screening the impossible: an audience-participation stage musical. Choreographically updated by Jeffrey Hornaday, it combines exuberant dance, a good song or three, with edgy dialogue. Showbiz loving itself, but for once so what? (Vicki Frederick, Audrey Landers).

Sogo Ishii's **Crazy Family,** not always laboriously, aims to shock. Hard-driven, office-worker father moves wife, teenage son and daughter into a new suburban house, trusting that 'the sickness' that assails them (recorded in his diary) will now vanish. They *are* a wildish bunch and grandpa, on a prolonged visit, aggravates their eccentricities; the missus mock-stripteasing for drunken guests; daughter riven between careers as pop-singer and pro-wrestler; baleful son hunched under earphones in electronic study, preparing for university exam. Then the paterfamilias goes bonkers in turn, excavating a basement pit for his dad to dwell in. Ensues a protracted sequence eerily crossing *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* with *Soap.* Very little blood, a modicum of early comedy, remorseless bad taste masquerading as satire.

Commando has superman Schwarzen-egger of the preposterous pectorals killing everything in sight as retired special ops Colonel Matrix (I kid you not) in tank-like motion after his kidnapped daughter. This must be the ultimate in trash comic-strip conspicuous destruction. Fat chance. □

FILMS: 2

Rule Britannia

Judith Williamson

The real *renaissance of British film might be happening just out of the limelight*

ARTICLES ON the future of British Film have become almost as hard to avoid as articles on the future of Westland. But the connection goes further than that. For a government that mobilises popular support around issues of national pride, the Thatcher administration's penchant for American take-overs appears contradictory; the same contradiction can be found between the ideologies of British Film Year and the practices of the most visible areas of the British film industry.

The publicity for British Film Year hinges on a nostalgic nationalism: it is posed not so much as something new but as a *revival* of the days when British cinema was 'great'. To suit this sentiment, a 'tradition' has rapidly been dug up, with, for example, the renovation of films by Powell and Pressburger —paradoxically, since their work was in many ways outside the mainstream. However, what matters is that the films are British, and *old.* More specifically, that they reinvoke the Forties, a period when patriotism went hand in hand with populism: the 'good old days' when nationalism could be justified even by the Left and a popular cinema drew a mass working-class audience.

The revival of British cinema in the Eighties has been seen simultaneously in terms of 'winning back' this mass audience and of 'putting Britain back on the map': 'The British are coming'. What has been revived is a colonialist rhetoric once reserved for the expansion of pink on the globe: 'It's easy to forget how wonderful British films used to be,' says the *Chariots of Fire* trailer, wistfully.

Of course, what the *films* won't let you forget is how great *Britain* used to be, with *Ghandi, A Passage to India,* etc. constantly harking back to the colonial days. *Chariots of Fire* itself draws the popular/patriotic equation particularly well, invoking both international success *and* domestic co-operation.

For we may not have much of a present, but the one thing we do have to sell is a past. The conglomerations of meanings and prestige that accumulate in a slowly-evolved culture are now one of our only assets; providing what French writer Pierre Bourdieu would call 'cultural capital'. Why else would Murdoch, a multi-millionaire, buy *The Times* ? There must be *easier* ways to make profits. But *The Times* has 'tradition' — like the Landrover trademark. The solution to the apparent contradiction between an obsession with Britain and an increasing annexation to US finance, is that *what* the foreigners are buying is precisely the much-vaunted Britishness. *Plenty,* a US production of a British script, is an interesting example of this: it manages simultaneously to use US mega-star Meryl Streep as a box-office draw and Fifties England as a cute backdrop for nostalgia masked as sociology.

The government's financial support for British Film Year might be seen as recognition of its ideological value to the nation. At the same time, the phasing out of tax concessions and the demise of the Eady levy are intended to make the British film industry stand on its own two feet: i.e. to pay its way on the American model. Yet it is technically impossible for a big-budget film industry in this country to do that. Only American audiences are large enough to enable old-style big-film production to make profits from 'bums on seats'. The US has become not merely the model but the key market for our mainstream film industry. Hence the much-criticised Goldcrest production *Revolution* — with American stars Pacino and Kinski and costs of over £20 million — which makes the mistake of thinking that American audiences want to see American, rather than English history.

Various Heseltine figures in the film world have opposed Americanisation, yet without (metaphorically speaking) questioning whether we really want helicopters built for carrying bombs at all. John Ellis recently argued for the Euroconsortium way out: i.e. more European co-productions along the lines of *A Zed and Two Noughts,* which was produced through a blend of Dutch finance with money from the British Film Institute, Channel 4 and the British company Artificial Eye. Yet it is in precisely such productions as the last two Greenaway glossies (one of which was accompanied by an exhibition of expensive costumes used) that the notion of putting Britain back on the map is most insidious. British Film Year presents itself as a popular front, ranging from big-time 'entertainment' to 'independent' Art Films. Work like Greenaway's comes in handy to represent the 'alternative' side to the great British revival, while functioning within fundamentally the same framework of high

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production values. The BFI, once one of the major sources of funding for exploratory films, has moved into a self-styled competition with the 'big-time', producing Art Film writ large, so everyone can see that the British are not only coming, but coming smartly dressed.

With the public debates of British Film Year focusing on these two strands of US-style show-biz and European-style Art, what has been largely ignored is the rapid expansion of a film culture based on something different from the simple consumption of art/entertainment. While Rank has been closing cinemas up and down the country over the last decade, there has been a sharp increase in the number of more locally based or specialised cinemas — and there are audiences to fill them.

The same period has seen a proliferation of regional workshops producing relatively low-budget independent films and videos; an expanding infrastructure of educational networks and debate about films old and new; and an increase in both film-making and film studies courses. It seems ironic that in an 'enterprise culture' perhaps the most truly enterprising area of British film culture should be so invisible to the public eye. □

MUSIC

Machine made

Andrew Clements

Maschinist Hopkins
Radio 3

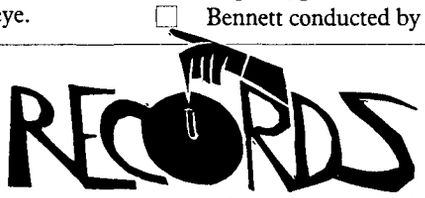
THE 'WEIMAR SEASON' that ended last weekend on Radio 3 contained several unexpected pieces among the expected mix of plays and operas. The range was wide enough, by any standards — from *Wozzeck* to *The Threepenny Opera*, Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* to Weinberger's *Schwanda the Bagpiper*, taking in dance bands (a wonderful collection titled *Mickey Mouse on the Kurfürstendamm*) and operetta. But the real discovery of the nine-day *Fest* was the opera *Maschinist Hopkins*, given in a studio production by Clive Bennett conducted by Simon Joly.

Its composer was Max Brand, a peripheral figure by any standards — neither the *New Grove* nor the previous fifth edition of *Grove* lists him; he does not merit a mention in Peter Heyworth's Klemperer biography, which contains a splendidly comprehensive treatment of Weimar opera. The only reference I could find is in the idiosyncratic pages of Nicolas Slonimsky's *Baker's Biographical Dictionary*, from which I gather that Brand was born in 1896, studied with Franz Schreker but made use of 12-note techniques as early as 1927, left Austria and Germany in 1938 for Brazil, later settled in the USA and died in Austria in 1980.

All this I discovered only after listening to *Maschinist Hopkins*, which was first produced at Duisburg in 1929, and quickly spread through Europe in some 30-odd stagings. The plot is very much of its time, a machine-age fable of workers' rights in an industrial society, involving a stolen secret formula that brings the thief wealth and power, a factory girl turned night-club singer who ends up as a prostitute and is finally murdered by her lover and an extraordinary cathartic ending in which two of the protagonists fall into the machines that began their destruction and are seemingly reborn as industrial automata, slaves to the industry that provides their life-line. It's easy to see how such a plot could have become a *succès de scandale* in the fragile democracy of Weimar and how in the gathering economic gloom of 1929 and '30 it could have found resonances all over Europe.

In operatic terms too it generates some powerful resonances. The parallels with Berg's *Lulu* are too strong to miss — the rise to fame and subsequent remorseless slide into degradation and death of its chief female character, the use of the third act to recapitulate material from earlier in the opera, now acquiring a totally new and unexpected meaning, and the incorporation of an onstage jazz band to conjure up the world of the night club. I suspect, though, that the similarities are less the result of direct influence than of common sources. Though *Hopkins* predates the completion of the first two acts of *Lulu* by five years, Berg had begun work on the libretto as early as 1927. Wedekind's plays presumably fuelled Brand's imagination also, while the success of Krenek's 'jazz opera' *Jonny spielt auf* (also included in the Weimar season), a year before *Hopkins*, presumably fostered the use of jazz and popular song — a Black Bottom routine for six black singers erupts into the first act as a quite alien and disruptive element.

Why then, for all its fascinating links with the better-known operas of the late 1920s, is *Maschinist Hopkins* so little known — this was reckoned to be the first performance of the complete score since the Nazis came to power in 1933 — and why has no more been heard of Brand, who continued to compose after emigrating and was involved in electronic music until his death? The answer is all too easy to hear: for all the opera's strokes of invention, its cunning synthesis of modernist trends, the music itself lacks any identifiable character. Schreker's was the name that came to mind when listening to the broadcast — Brand's style has the same mixture of



Live and Kicking
KIERAN HALPIN *Celtic Music* CMO21
Kieran Halpin is too fond of love songs for my liking, though he writes them well enough. On this, his best record to date, the Irish singer-songwriter contrasts them with more substantial offerings: 'No Turning Back', about a gunman unable to quit the conflict in the North; 'Faces of England', about the unemployment problem on this side of the water; 'The Old Simplicity', which explores a familiar Halpin theme, the nostalgia of the elderly: 'old men smoking out each others' faded dreams'. The production is first rate. The man has a voice like stout strained through barbed wire and a lyrically idiosyncratic guitar style — and these are pushed well to the fore, underpinned only by Martin Allcock's supple bass. Halpin deserves his niche among the pick of rock-influenced folk performers.

Live in London
RICKY SKAGGS *Epic* 26618
This man is the toothy smile on the acceptable face of country music and shows, here, his roots in bluegrass and Western Swing. His stage manner may be hyped up and clichéd; his band is anything but, complementing superbly his own fretboard dexterity and light tenor voice. Skaggs has written some superior songs and tunes, but covers other people's material in this set from the Dominion Theatre. When he and Elvis Costello jam together on 'Don't Get Above Your Raising' — a rocking version of the Flatt Scruggs classic — you can smell burning.

The Stewarts of Blair
THE STEWARTS *Lismor* LIFL 7010
If you think unaccompanied singing is boring, listen to this. Belle Stewart, now in her 80s, joins with her daughters, Shiela and Cathie, to turn in a thrilling series of performances. Note especially Belle's own composition 'The Berry Fields of Blair', Cathie's 'My Dog and Gun' (an old song about the prejudices against travellers) and Shiela's account of Ewan MacColl's 'Moving on Song'. The Stewarts are of course themselves of Traveller stock. No one with an interest in music or social history should be without this record.

Chance or Design
THE EASY CLUB *REL* RELS 479
The first record from this enterprising four-piece outfit proved that its Scottish Rhythm and Swing was no mere gimmick. The worry, however, was that swing simply went against the sad and noble grain of a lot of the songs. The worry persists on this their second and mostly excellent disc. There's a certain want of tact (or something like it) in tackling John Watt's fine ballad, 'The Eyemouth Disaster', with headlong jazzy syncopation. What is not in doubt is the virtuosity on display: all the members have seen service with the cream of Scots traditional bands and their spicy, assertive acoustic sound pushes folk beyond its outer limits. Of particular merit are Rod Paterson's deep, dark singing and the scuffling bhodran of Jim Sutherland. Django Reinhardt meets the Battlefield Band. Get your ears within range soon.

Donny O'Rourke

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harmonic daring and soft-centred lyricism; other composers flit through the score to make particular musical points — there is even one passage that sounds unnervingly like Vaughan Williams — and of Brand himself one detects not a trace. The music for the machines that frames the opera is a striking invention, but it is just that — an invention that does not go anywhere, cannot be developed and exists like any other colouristic device. Though one would like to hear more of Brand's later work, the case for rehabilitation was not made by this well-turned out and totally worthwhile revival. □

THEATRE

What a piece of work

Benedict Nightingale

Progress
DOUG LUCIE *Lyric, Hammersmith*
Not About Heroes
STEPHEN MacDONALD *Cottesloe*

IS THERE SUCH a creature as a non-sexist man? Could he conceivably have evolved, according to Darwinian laws of adaptation to a changing environment, in some chic den or modish lair on the brick scarps of NW6? Doug Lucie asks those timely questions at the Lyric, then answers them in ways likely to give comfort mainly to the extremer apostles of sexual apartheid. **Progress** (he sardonically suggests) is what we wish to make, what we're right to try to make, but what we find ourselves signally failing to make, at least if we're men and the subjects of our emotional scenario women.

Will is a current-affairs researcher for Channel 4, married to a woman who runs a community centre, and the moving force in a men's group where, as he put it, 'we're trying to change our attitudes by being open and supportive without resorting to traditional, hierarchical structures'. Already it must sound to you as if Lucie is pointing a satiric finger, or maybe waving two in the general direction of the 'progressives'. Nothing that follows will lead you to revise that first impression. Will has generously enjoined self-discovery and self-fulfilment on his wife, to the extent of encouraging her to launch into a lesbian love-affair; but fundamentally, it seems, in the hope that this will result in a more orgiastic sex-life for himself. And when Ronee, as she's called, gives sanctuary to Ange, who is first battered then raped by her husband, his behaviour is not a lot less greedy and devious. He uses the young woman in the old way, then persuades her to make advances to his wife, for private erotic purposes we're tactfully left to guess and boggle at. Behind that reconstructed front of his, the old Adam is clearly salivating away, unprincipled as ever.

But is Lucie really so bleak and unvarying a cynic? Well, Will has his grey spots and Ange her less than white one. He's not quite as predatory a seducer as bald summary makes him sound, nor she as innocent a seducee. More to the point, there are other male characters on show, offering the author an opportunity to quibble, discriminate, make qualifications. But that's not what Lucie does, at least when he brings his remaining heterosexuals onstage. One of these is the violent husband, for whom the best to be said is that he's the incoherently angry victim of a dismal environment and brutally narrow upbringing. The other is Will's sitting tenant, a Grub Street hack whose crudenesses and unending salacities can only marginally be explained by a mischievous delight in baiting 'trendy lefties'. At the end he's off to 'get ratarsed, find some dirty slags and have a bachelor night'; and all but persuades his landlord to accompany him. You get the feeling that Lucie prefers such candour to any earnest deceit or self-deceit.

You get an even stronger feeling that men and women would do well to stay clearish of each other. But that doesn't mean that Lucie sentimentalises the gay alternatives to be found in his male encounter group. Behind the radical flam, podgy Ollie is a muddle and a mess, all physical ennui and desperate possessiveness. Little Martin is forlornly marooned between half-hearted affection for him and desire for Bruce, who is, on the face of it, the only honest and self-knowing man in the play. Yet even he is ruefully compelled to admit, as he contemplates the Earls Court merrygoround, that 'I'm not very good with people, they don't stay long'. The feeling you get from these people is that sex, if not necessarily a menace to others, is a millstone to themselves. The feeling you get is it might be better not to be male in the first place.

Is this to ascribe to Lucie a greater universality than he courts or claims? Very likely. Very likely his aim is simply to prick the airier pretensions of sexual progressivism and remind us how far there is still to go. Nevertheless, his play advances enough general truths to make any decent male feel uncomfortable, as well as enough selectivity and exemplary exaggeration to make him feel got at and aggrieved. It is also, let's not forget, packed with a sly, wry humour that rarely has you laughing openly, but often leaves you doing something more germane: looking at the conscientious hypocrisies to which the characters are prone, their habits of not quite admitting what they feel and not quite feeling what they admit to, and nervously wondering whether they might be your own. Moreover, it's deftly performed by a cast that includes Mike Gwilym as the opportunistic Will, Michele Winstanley as a plausibly put-upon Ange and (the performance of the evening) Struan Rodger as Bruce, a diffident stammerer as inwardly steely as circumstances demand. Their joint efforts leave me, I fear, with barely a breath for **Not About Heroes**, which is a bit untheatrical in its portrayal of the friendship of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, but, by the the end, a touching celebration of creativity and, dare one say, love. Any man smarting from Lucie would do well to see it, just to feel better about the gender. □

Men on the run

Carl Gardner

WHEN I WAS a schoolboy in Bolton, back in the 1960s, the marathon runner Ron Hill was one of my local heroes — though my reluctant annual shamble round the school cross-country course was hardly a worthy homage. Long before I willingly put Nike to tarmac, when marathon running was simply a minority masochism on a par with sword swallowing, he was out there pounding the pavements, winning marathon golds at the European and Commonwealth Games.

So, in the wake of my belated conversion to the sport, it was with great anticipation that I recently picked up Hill's autobiography *The Long Hard Road**. The effect was shattering, a little like discovering 'girlie' magazines under your Dad's bed. In a few hours, my respect for his athletic achievement was almost neutralised by this gruelling self-portrait of a man in the grip of a sordid obsession, consumed by an overwhelming need to prove himself again and again on track and road. At the same time, my disgust at his compulsive monomania was partly an uncomfortable self-recognition, a horror at the often pathetic distortions of maleness itself.

Structuralism used to say about writing that *we* don't write, but that writing writes us. Transferred to the running-track, the point is made again by Ron Hill: clearly he didn't control his running; running ran him, turning him into an inflexible, one-dimensional monster. How else does one explain his macho insistence on going for his daily training run in all weathers, even staggering round in agony while ill or injured? How else could he treat his wife and family as domestic chattels to be fitted into his schedule?

In some respects, Hill is an extreme parody of the male athlete. In others, however, he's typical. Such ruthless behaviour by men in the pursuit of their imagined goals is nowadays regarded as normal. Success is its own justification. Obsessive, single-minded over-achievement, at the expense of those around us and even our own physical and psychic health, is the epitome of masculine action.

Running, of course, is only one example, but, as the latest boom sport of the aspiring middle-class male, it's a good one. We all think we know why we're out on the roads, honing up our bodies, pushing back mortality. But what are we running *from*? Perhaps it's our own emotional and personal inadequacies, which we might have to confront if we spent more time with our partners or (heaven forbid) talking seriously to each other about ourselves. So much easier to deal with challenges 'out there'. For a man, actions *do* speak louder than words — it's a cliché with a gender.

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S & G Photography

But, as he jogs round the House of Commons, what is Hugh Rossi MP (plus friend) running *from?*

Running is no longer just putting one foot in front of the other — if it ever was. For me, for example, it's about *control* at several levels. First, it's one space in the day that I can control completely, somewhere I can't be caught by work or obligation — and, within that space, there's the further control of time, a constant monitoring of the body and its operations against the clock. Then there's the sense of territorial control: ranging fast and on foot over large tracts of North London is a sort of primitive challenge to urban life. Last, beneath all this, there's the almost magical control over the very molecules of the body — two years' running and shedding 35 lbs has literally changed my entire shape and texture.

For a time, I too was threatened by the Ron Hill syndrome. If only I could do more training, I thought, I'd get even better, fitter, thinner, and have *more* control over my life, my physique, my self-esteem. It took the healthy scepticism, not to say intolerance of my female partner to get me off the speeding treadmill. Now, at last, I've settled for athletic mediocrity.

This question of gender is crucial. Obviously women have their own reasons for running, but, in my experience, few of them seem concerned with times, clocks, 'personal bests' and all the other paraphernalia of the male running world. Somehow they seem more involved with the quality of the experience of running itself — they don't have to keep testing it objectively, or measuring it minutely to give it meaning. And, in running as in other things, they seem less willing to endanger their personal and social lives for the sake of further achievement. When Ingrid Kristiansen, the women's world record holder at 10,000 metres and the marathon, discovered that knitting had given her a hunched-up running style, did she ever consider giving up the knitting? I doubt it.

During the 1984 televised Adidas Marathon in Bolton, the clear women's race leader, Veronique Marot, kept looking back over her shoulder about a mile from the finish. Eventually she stopped and ran back down the road to the second-place woman suffering badly some distance behind. Encouragingly, Marot accompanied her to the finish and into joint first place. The male commentator managed to ignore this untypical gesture, and one can perhaps understand why. After all, such Utopian acts of cooperation, if taken to their conclusion, could mean the end of civilised, competitive sport as we know it. Somehow, I can't see Ron Hill, or any other leading male athlete, or even this humble runner-writer, doing the same thing . . . yet. □

*The Long Hard Road *is published by Ron Hill Sports (1981/1982)*

Naseem Khan

Big business

OCCASIONALLY you get a chance to see into the future. More often than not, the prospect is horrible.

And so it was at Bournemouth the other week, where a host of entertainments managers, promoters and hopeful acts had turned up, under the annual banner of 'Entertainment '86'. Although most of the serious business went on down in the large exhibition hall where the air rang with talk of deals, upstairs the theorising went on. What was the shape of entertainment to come? What sort of planning should go into the future? Was the industry — in common with economic life at large — in a sorry state or doing very nicely? And lastly — but not of minor importance — what did the Geldof phenomenon imply?

To answer all these questions and to pose more, Entertainment '86 had gathered together 20 men (variety promoters, local authority chief, arts subsidisers *et al*) and given them half-a-dozen seminars.

You'd have expected, given all the talk of arts cuts, the general tone to have been gloomy. Not a bit of it. Buoyancy was the order of the day at the sessions I attended. Take the Promoters' Panel, for instance, with three men who offer 'product' to bookers. There was young Nick Thomas, owner of seven pantos and, at 25, the youngest promoter in the game; Brian Shaw, with denizens like Freddie Starr, Bob Monkhouse and Emu in his pocket; and, as the chairman put it, affectionately, 'our own Derek Block . . . We can rely on you, Derek, to give us a good kick in the groin'. All of them — even the groin-kicker — evinced cautious optimism compared with a similar platform in Entertainment '84. 'The business is in pretty good shape,' said Block cheerfully.

Mark you, life is not all rosy. Managers and bookers might have got a bit more efficient in publicising and selling promoters' shows (the major gripe in '84), artistes might have got more 'reasonable', as Brian Shaw claimed, in their demanded fees, but the Geldof story has shown there are still millions of punters out there ready to hand over their money who are not, for various reasons, being accommodated. Why is this? Partly, said promoters and would-be takers, it's a lack of good new product (and this deserves a piece on its own). Partly, said not only the promoters but also City University's Michael Quine, it's the size of venues now available. If only, said Derek Block passionately and often, we had a string of large capacity venues, life would be different: not eleven- to fifteen-hundred seaters — 'useless' — but four- or five-thousand seaters, lots of them spread over the country, a draw for the world-class entertainers who won't, he said, now come here. And the effect could be

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shopbreading — look at Brighton: 'It's come a long since they put the Conference Centre in.' Maybe I must admit to some shrinking at the prospect of 50 or so mega-centres soaking up the entertainment of Britain and to having much sympathy with an anonymous official from Southwark. Nice, he said politely, that the super-league was healthy, but his 350-seater looked likely to bite the dust, unable to hire the draws like Gary Wilmott who had, ironically, cut their showbiz teeth in Southwark. What did Block advise? he asked. Get a 3,000-seater urged Block; it was investment in the infrastructure of the future.

There is more than a smack to all this of the unctuous brand of new realism, the stand-on-your-own-feet-ery that has put the arts world so much on the defensive. Nevertheless, scale seemed to be the theme of several speakers. Richard Tibbott, director of a leisure consultancy firm, described their success in getting three to four billion people into the Liverpool Gardens Festival. ('Our objects are to generate large numbers of people on site, to make that known to private investment and to government.') But if the money is in big units, would this not undermine the small ones (from Southwark's hall to the subsidised sector so derided by most promoters) even more? Would the result be an increasingly narrow range of work, of an increasingly bland nature?

Scale, however, is more ambiguous, it seems, than one would think. Michael Quine closely followed the arguments of his colleague John Pick (to be found in the latter's provocative *Theatre Industry*, Comedia, £15) in his vigorous speech. Venues in post-war years have been getting steadily smaller. (In 1950 the ratio of theatre seats to population was 1:87. In 1980 it had fallen to 1:174.) At the same time, the ratio between theatre performers and administrators is now weighted heavily in favour of the latter.

At the heart of the present malaise, argue Pick and Quine, is subsidy — subsidy that has encouraged deficit financing, that has imposed unpopular programming leading to a narrowing of work on offer and — above all — to uneconomic theatres. 'The archetypal contemporary theatres — 600 seats', writes Pick soothingly, 'expensively over-equipped, surrounded by every eating, drinking and shopping service — is fashioned in the theory that the theatre must be run by social scientists and subsidisers. It is built for a minority and it is built to be expensive.' There is much truth in this, as anyone involved in small-scale theatre will know. Small venues like London's excellent Bush Theatre, which regularly play to full houses, cannot, even so, hope to break even. But this does not mean that the future lies with the Derek Blocks of this world.

The problem with the Entertainment '86 debates was that they over-simplified the choices and also the relationship between the smaller venues and the big time. (Where did the Fascinating Aidas, now doing very nicely with the mainstream Noel Gay Management, learn their trade?) The confrontations set up in the seminars presented each side in its worst aspect — the feebleness of the arts world and the arrogance of the show-biz men: a world of wimps and monsters. □

TELEVISION

Hugo Williams

Strip show

ADS SHOULD be put in newspapers for couples to get in touch with a television company when they felt a copulation coming on; they'd have to agree to go into separate rooms until the camera crew got there and they could make a start. Americans, being what they are, have preferred to see couples arguing to fucking, which, according to **Couples Arguing** (C4), often amounts to the same thing. 'We have fights because it makes us close afterwards,' said one woman to camera. 'I used to avoid conflict. I'm trying not to do that any more.' Keep up the good work, madam, because arguing is 'an activity which may help to sustain a relationship.' And nowhere as much as in America, where 'honesty' is usually a synonym for 'mental cruelty'.

What is dossle? 'You want me to be nice, mellow, polite and dossle,' says a wife. Is it the same as dossable, as in bunk-up? 'Those words are not synonyms,' accuses her partner rightly. 'I'm this big guy with this huge temper in a little tiny apartment,' he goes on. 'So I have to take myself away,' returns his wife, exposing the heart of their tragedy.

A ferret-faced jogger expressed an allergy to his step-son which I, for one, would readily have reciprocated. 'He waits till I come in then suddenly he gets up and scrapes the chair and he's out the door with his shoes hanging from his mouth and his hair all . . .' Words failed to describe the holocaust of his stepson's hairstyle, which was clearly fulfilling all its perpetrator's intentions. Chair-behaviour, hair-manners, this is the established vocabulary of filial insubordination, although shoe-dangling would seem to have been more part of the father's sickness than the son's war strategy, hence the programme's (slight) entertainment value.

The couples blur in my mind into a kind of menopause-and-muesli moral majority type of outlook, too conceptual for here, but the occasional murmur did cross the Atlantic intact: 'I come in and I'm a bus driver and I give her a look like I might give one of my passengers, like that, and she goes all to pieces . . . she's coming into my room where I sleep and she's saying I want this thing resolved and I'm saying you don't have to sleep, you don't have a job to go to, you can stay up all night and sleep tomorrow.' Me, I'm just thinking what a poor old fellow he is when it emerges that he's quibbling over giving her $80 a week when he's allowed $130 himself for gambling. 'What we're establishing here is what this $80 is going to cover,' he tells the poor woman stuck at home with his baby.

It emerged that many of our so-called arguments don't get solved because they're still sorting out the rules of how to argue and about what. It goes without saying that one accuses one's partner of one's own crimes. 'You're such a snob,' means I am. 'You don't love me,' means 'Do I really love you?' The interlocutor's findings were mostly suave, but such wisdom as 'The more he gives, the more she receives' would seem to simple itself out as a value-for-money diagnosis.

I wonder what was really going on. In my experience, domestic arguments are ritual dramas with set lines, areas for improvisation and very, very rarely some small innovation of detail. Often they seem to be artistically perfect in their way, but for one thing: the lack of an appreciative audience. Trust the Americans to fulfill this need.

More usual TV-fare is set firmly in Sixties-land, most current producers and coronary-candidates having grown up there. Surely Larkin charted an immortal moment with his 'Between the end of the Chatterley ban/And the Beatles first LP'. The BBC's *Screen Two*, which last week provided a satire on the scrofulous world of adverts quite worthy of Evelyn Waugh, **Honest, Decent and True**, this week let loose a near-perfect specimen of naivus-fuctupicus — Sixties variety, naturally — called **Song of Experience** (BBC2).

The Chatterley case has just broken in the Sunday papers being delivered by the knowing Johnny Spencer, who even knows where babies come from, but isn't telling. 'Go play with yessen, Bennet,' he advises. A nice period touch is that the leather-jacketed Johnny doesn't know yet that it isn't cool to go train-spotting with your juniors. They take a transistor and the 'songs of innocence' coming over on *Children's Favourites*, then later on *Saturday Club* (Hello, again, this is your old friend Brian Matthews!!!), 'Wake up, little Susie', 'The Runaway Train', etc, make haunting, frightening contrast with the 'song of experience' which the outing will later turn into. 'Please give us some Ricky,' Johnny begs the radio, but receives only Rolf Harris doing something frustrating to his 'Kangaroo'.

Everything in the film, as in the period, is loaded with unborn sensuality. How author Martin Allen must have whooped when he hit on the communication cord in the old corridorless compartment as a symbol of repressed subversive sex. To pull or not to pull? Johnny flirts with the challenge and his pals, decides against, then does it, exactly as in life. Grind of wheels, then a long Edward Thomas-esque pause in the seeding countryside as the years go past for a moment in silence. Train-spotting binoculars are trained on some heavy petting in a moored Vauxhall. Johnny won't let the kids look, but he passes them forward 20 years to his still happily prurient followers and we get a closeup of Fifties tit revealing itself to Sixties permissiveness, this being 1960. 'Is that chain hanging slack?' the guard asks Johnny from the track. They hold each other's look so that we can pick up on any innuendo going begging, then Johnny gives his insolent 'No.' The scene in the engine shed where the policeman exercises his 'special privileges' under 'sub-section 3B of the Railway Code', the beauty of which is that the fat boy's parents need never know, might lead one to suppose we have made some progress in the intervening years, if the reverse weren't so obviously the case. □

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Weekend competition

No 2912 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

The tango is back, so will not other dances follow? Could we please have extracts from press (or other media) accounts of the return to the popular scene of the minuet? Max. 120 words by 6 March.

No 2909 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Dickensian descriptions of comp. regulars.

Report **By Ms de Meaner**

Ah, my babies, like tickled trout you rolled on to your backs and blew mad bubbles of purring introspection and viciousness. Shoals and shoals of you vibrating at the gills . . . But no, this metaphor will have to stop, my acquaintanceship with trout being strictly confined to the *au bleu/aux amandes* stage. Suffice it to say that Will Bellenger, in several of his metamorphoses, had as high a profile as the *subject* of your entries as he does as the author of his own. (Only Basil Ransome-Davies came close.) Honourable mentions to Nigel Bunker, Pascoe Polglaze, Mark Ambrose, Russell Lucas. Twelve pounds a head to those below.

They waited in a dingy ale-house under the shadow of Exeter's tower. Llewellyn Berg, surly and black-avised, strummed his jew's-harp while motherly Ellen Brigwell calmly sharpened her pencils by the fire. Gill Breenllew strode impatiently about, pausing only to admire her reflection in the dim mirror above the sideboard. Berni Wellgell and E. L. Bellwringle, the young ones, huddled on the settle and started with the rest when the door flew open and Will Bellenger, panting, dashed in.

'Look out! He's coming!' cried Will and the tall hodden-cloaked figure of Bill Greenwell swept in and flung a crumpled *New Statesman* on the table. He glared at the others and shouted, 'Nothing this week! Damn Norman! I tell you, it won't do!'

JOHN SWEETMAN

Stanley J. Sharpless

The garden appeared deserted until we noticed a small gentleman sitting on a tree stump. Though we were not expected, he was impeccably attired in bow tie and panama hat, from beneath which a lean countenance blinked in the sun, weathered and indestructible as quality Edwardian leather. From a pocket of his white cambric jacket tumbled what I must assume was a bandanna. He carried an air of rose-pruning, though we saw no roses.

He said little, except to pierce some over-pretentious question like an amiable lizard lancing out a tongue several times its own length, remaining immobile the while.

We were told he was 'no trouble', though 'inclined to be frisky after the cocoa'.

NOEL PETTY

Passing down the shady side of Farringdon Lane (and, indeed, it would prove a tiresome mission to find a side that was otherwise) an evening stroller might find his eye distracted by a singular personage. Against the dismal frontage of a periodical office leans a man who has made his peace with a warring world. The buoyant waves of snow-white hair declare it; the rosy folds of his cheeks, the ample cravat and the bow-fronted mustard waistcoat declare it — in short, from his curls to his shoe buckles, Will Bellenger is a man who has found his niche — and has sat in it.

LISSA EVANS

Behind the great desk piled high with assorted periodicals sat Mr Parrott. His visage was like a vast Norfolk sky across which clouds scudded at a pace changing its aspect in the moment. The monstrous proboscis resembled uncannily that which was borne by the unfortunate Harrison Everard until, turning, the light so fell as to soften its line and conjure up a younger M. K. Cheeseman. The pouting lips were the property of Maud Gracechurch; the fine crop of silver-grey hair was grown from the same seed that brought forth Robin Chase's mane; the gapped teeth matched exactly those of Pat Blackford. To describe Mr Parrott as two-faced would be to underestimate the repertoire of his physiognomy.

REX VON SECT

Bill Greenwell, sir. A person of protean versatility. No sooner glimpsed than — lo! — transformed into an altogether other creature. Before your eyes the Greenwell who must stand up to drink, so well nourished by the brewery interests is his proud corporation, will vanish like an illusionist's dove. You will be talking, then, to Gill Breenllew, topaz-eyed and a fast rusher of the net. Or Will Bellenger may confront you, an alarming sight with his club foot and thick-lensed spectacles — yet the fellow is kindly. Beware Nell L. Wregible, though, dear reader. Before literary fame overtook her, she electrified the taverns of Cheapside as a lady pugilist and made more than one ardent young counting-house clerk feel the regrets of an insolently straying hand upon his own skin.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

'Basil!' remarked Mrs Ransome-Davies, a trifle sharply, as if thereby to intimate some species of disaffection. The effect of her innocent rejoinder upon her spouse was remarkable. With a sneer that severed his whey-coloured cheeks, he let forth such a stream of insidious invective as pinned Mrs R.-D. to a wall, and encouraged seventeen villainous cats to scramble for the window. 'If I'ears you a Basillin' me agin, ma'am, you wermonous liddle drollop,' averred her husband in conclusion to his speeches, 'I shall be a-boxin' your dreacherous lugs wery wigorous indeed.' And at this he fell to polishing his left eye — the yellow one — with particular intensity.

WILL BELLENGER

'But Mr Stephenson, sir, who are these gentlemen who win your competitions so frequently? Do you know them all?'

'My dear boy, I *am* them all!'

'Beg your pardon, sir?'

'All fictions of my very ample imagination — quite remunerative fictions, indeed.'

'You mean they don't exist?'

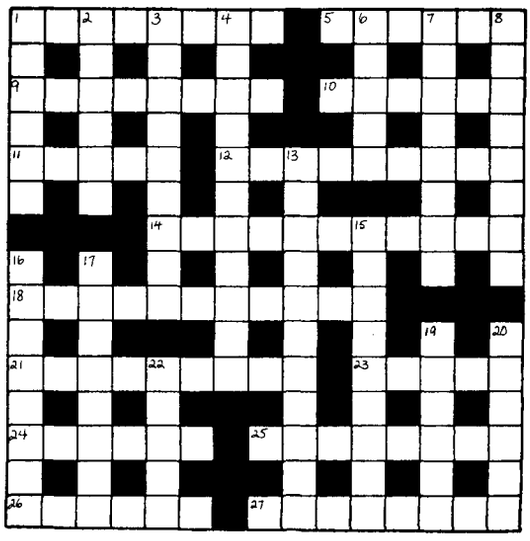
'Correct, child. I write'em all meself. And pay meself the winnings. Of course, every now and again I give, ahem, honourable mentions to *genuine* contributors, just to encourage them in their efforts, and of course, their purchasing. Good for circulation, y'know, and very good for *my* circulation.'

'And the letters page, sir?'

M. BROWN

Weekend Crossword 1509

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1509, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU by first post 11 March.



ACROSS

1. What is true about the change of life is that beauty treatment is needed (8)
5. Tied together like a boy embracing a girl (6)
9. Low fellow declares they may have been killed (8)
10. Remove freedom from bearers of heredity in sleep (6)
11. Drug taken by good conservative in honour (5)
12. Sword of an unknown capacity, by the sound of it (9)
14. She is finished with housework and favours dancing (11)
18. Very cheap beer but it helps to fill one out (11)
21. Pot holding drink for farm worker (9)
23. Pope not peasant (5)
24. Believed there is something sharp in a dictionary (6)
25. To contend for title I am maimed (8)
26. Punish a hothead surrounded by worthless things (6)
27. Donkeys hold a soldier back when appointed (8)

DOWN

1. A loud-speaker in a theatre is something to consider (6)
2. Clubman who has to join in a company (6)
3. The union has to be fond of a striker (9)
4. In the country patience is possibly a bore (11)
6. Spirit of war I eliminate by peace (5)
7. It gives instructions to enable worker to show disapproval of king (8)
8. Act without a role being left (8)
13. Food suitable for party throwers? (7,4)
15. Composer who puts a heavenly being inside one (9)
16. Branch which twists soft hoof (8)
17. Born a prince and so more intelligent (8)
19. Get on a bit differently (6)
20. Have purpose which is in the main tendentious (6)
22. Brings equality when a woman is brought before us (5)

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MEETINGS

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for free pamphlets, book list, programme of activities. Informal short talk & questions. 'Aphorisms on Karma' 8 p.m. 23 Feb. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL. N8.37

CONFERENCE

OEL presents 'The State of Criticism: Theory and Strategy in Education', a one-day conference of socialist/feminist perspective in education. Speakers include Raymond Williams, Michele Barrett, Terry Eagleton, Catherine Belsey, Francis Mulhern, Helen Taylor, and many others. Saturday 8 March, St Cross Building, Oxford. Creche facilities. Tickets £8/£5 (concs.) Cheques to OEL. Contact C. Watts, Wadham College, Oxford. (0865) 53994. N8.26

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AGENDA

FRI 21 FEB

CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS & BROADCASTING FREEDOM. Press launch for 'Wapping Lies!' new video on the crisis in Fleet Street. Showings at 2, 2.30, 3, 3.30pm at The ICA, The Mall, SW1. Campaign members & supporters welcome.

SAT 22 FEB

STAYING ALIVE. A day of discussions in 18 workshops organised by Marxism Today and CP Advisory. Speakers: Beresford, Johns, Kent, McLennan and from Soviet Union. More information telephone **01-251 4406.**

MON 24 FEB

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON: Sarah Stolz Memorial Lecture. Speaker: Dr Otto von Habsburg, MEP, on *The European Challenge*. At the Tower Lecuture Theatre, Guy's Hospital, London Bridge, SE1. 4pm for 4.30pm. Also Banquet (black tie) at the English Speaking Union 7.30 for 8pm, £28 per head inc. wine and liquers. Reserverations: David Griffiths, 37 Charles Street, London W1H 8AB. Tel: 01-629 5920.

TUES 25 FEB

SRA Evening Seminar: 'Faith in the City': Using Social Research. Professor A. H. Halsey, University of Oxford. The Boardroom, NOP, Tower House, Southampton Street, London WC2, 5.30-7pm. 50p members, £1 non-members. Info. SRA: 01-884 3058.

WED 26 FEB

ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT'S Day of Action. Picket Barclays Bank Head Office, junction Lombard St/Gracechurch St. (Bank Tube) 1pm-2pm. London District Communist Party.

FAITH IN THE CITY at St James's Church Piccadilly, 1.05 p.m. This week: **Robina Rafferty**, Assistant Director, Catholic Housing Aid Society, "HOUSING – ALWAYS THE CINDERELLA."

SUPPORT THE PRINTWORKERS! Communist Party Public Meetings:

GREENWICH 8pm, Charlton House, Charlton Village, SE7. **Mike Power** NGA – Mail on Sunday, Campaign for Press Freedom. + video "Wapping Lies."

HACKNEY 7.30pm, Family Centre, 50 Rectory Road, N16. **John Breen** (FoC N.O.W. NGA) **Jim Westwood** (EEPTU).

MUSWELL HILL 8pm, Muswell Hill Library, Queens Avenue, Muswell Hill Broadway. **Bill French** (Imperial FoC, Times Newspapers NGA).

PUBLIC HEALTH LONDON ACTION GROUP

Meeting for all EHO's, 6.15pm, GLC County Hall, including E.G.M. item on civil defence.

WED 26—FRI 28 FEB

JOINT ACTION FOR JOBS. European Consultation: 26-28 February, London. The Book of the Campaign: Spokesman, Nottingham. Details Ken Fleet, (0602) 784504.

FRI 28 FEB

SOUTH AFRICA: THE WAY FORWARD. speakers: Zola Zenbe of SACTU, Michael Hindley MEP, Janet Anderson. 7.30 p.m. Haslingden Library, Rossendale.

SAT 1 MAR

EDUCATING FOR PEACE – a conference on Peace Education held in the UN International Year of Peace at St Francis Hall, University of Birmingham. For parents, teachers, students and those involved in educational administration. 9.30am-4.30pm. Cost £3/£2. Information/ Registration forms from: Educating for Peace, 54 Allison Street, Digbeth, Birmingham B5 5TH. Tel: 021-643 4617.

TAKING THE NURSERY MESSAGE TO PARLIAMENT: HOW TO LOBBY TO YOUR MP. A workshop on lobbying tactics organised by the **Workplace Nurseries Campaign** at the Friends Meeting House, St. Martin's Lane, London WC2, 10am-1pm. Speakers include Sue Ward and an MP. Creche. Full access. Tel: 01-582 7199 if you want to attend and especially for space in creche or if you require a signer.

MON 3 MAR

UNION RIGHTS LECTURE by Antony Lester QC, 6pm, Royal Commonwealth Society, 18 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2. The lecture will also cover the civil rights of civil servants. It is organised by the First Division Association to mark the second anniversary of GCHQ union ban. Entrance free.

THURS 6 MAR

THE CENTRE FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC STRATEGIES is organising a workshop on proposals for specific powers for local authorities to intervene in the local economy. Enquiries to CLES, Heron House, Brazenose Street, Manchester M2 5HD. 061-834 7036.

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February 21st 6.30pm
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WELL, NEARLY AS FAR FETCHED
DANIS GOODMAN

CHESS

ARE GAMES won or lost? Winners are usually happy enough to attribute a decisive amount to some piece of cleverness on their part. But in our games this week it does seem to be the loser who bears the primary creative responsibility for a publishable product.

After his poor performance in Montpellier Korchnoi had a lot to prove and victims to find on which to prove it. He commenced rehabilitation by turning what could have been quite a cosy little tournament in Brussels over Christmas into a reign of terror in his good old style, taking first place with 11 out of 13. In this game from the 1st round an Argentinian IM gets Viktor off to a flying start by advancing prematurely in the centre and then castling into trouble.

Korchnoi — Garcia Palermo, Brussels 1985. Reti Opening.
1. Nf3 d5 2. c4 dxc4 3. Qa4 + c6 4. Qxc4 Nf6 5. g3 Bg4 6. Bg2 Nbd7 7. d4 Bxf3 8. Bxf3 e5 9. Be3 e4? Over-expansion as Black is not prepared for the task of supporting this pawn. **10. Bg2 Nd5 11. 0-0 f5 12. Nc3 N7b6 13. Qb3 Qd7 14. Bd2 a5 15. a4 Bb4 16. f3! e3 17. Nxd5 Nxd5.** If 17 . . .exd2, then 18. Qe3 + wins **18. Bxb4 axb4 19. f4 0-0-0?** Black loses at least one pawn however he plays, but 19 . . . 0-0 was much more sensible. **20. a5 Nc7 21. a6 Nxa6 22. Bxc6! Qe7 23. Qc4 Nc7 24. Ra7 1-0.** After 24 . . . bxc6 25. Qxc6 there is no adequate defence against the threatened Ra8.

The next case is rather sad since it was Timman's third consecutive loss from his candidates' semi-final match. It is also another reverse for the Grünfeld, a spirited defence that has fallen on hard times. Yet even if the Grünfeld is a risky business these days, it surely should not get crushed quite as quickly as this.

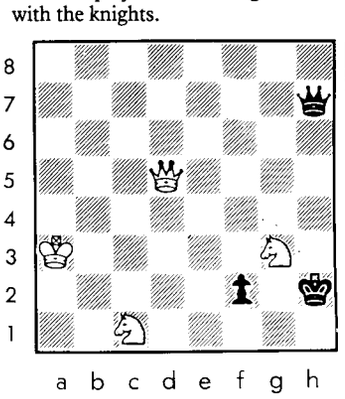
Yusupov — Timman, 7th match game 1986. Grünfeld Defence.
1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 d5 4. cxd5 Nxd5 5. e4 Nxc3 6. bxc3 Bg7 7. Bc4 b6 7 . . . c5 is more popular, and likely to stay so. **8. Qf3 0-0 9. e5 Ba6 10. Bd5!** 10. Bb3 is also quite a good move, but Yusupov does well to avoid 10. Qxa8? Bxc4 11. Qf3 f6 12. e6 Qd6 and 10. Bxf7 + Rxf7 11. Qxa8 Bxe5 12. dxe5? Qd3, with advantage to Black in both cases. **c6 11. Bb3 Qc7 12. h4 c5 13. h5 cxd4 14. cxd4 gxh5.** This looks and is absolutely dreadful. But Black loses just as quickly after 14 . . . Nc6 15. hxg6 16.Qh3 Rfd8 17. Qh7 + Kf8 18. Bh6. **15. Rxh5 Bb7 16. Qd3 Rd8 17. Qxh7 + Kf8 18. Ne2 Rxd4 19. Bh6 1-0.** Ouch!

To complete this drastic trilogy of Black misadventures, here is an attractive win by Hodgson from his recent tournament success in Holland. The combinative blows with which he ends the game make it look like a winner's effort. But the loser makes two very serious mistakes — he castles on the wrong side and recaptures the wrong way on d5.

Hodgson — Seirawan, Wijk aan Zee 1986. King's Indian Attack.
1. e4 e6 2. d3 d5 3. Nd2 Nf6 4. Ngf3 c5 5. g3 b6 6. Bg2 Bb7 7. 0-0 Nc6 8. Re1 Be7 9. c3 h6 10. a3 a5? Black allows himself to be scared off. 10 . . .Qc7 followed by . . .0-0-0 is a much more promising treatment. **11. exd5 exd5?** In such a position 11 . . . Nxd5! is the only move to consider. The move played cedes f5 and the e-file, blocks the Bb7, and misses the chance for play in the d-file. **12. Nh4 0-0 13. Nf5 Re8 14. Qf3 Qc7 15. Nf1 Ne5 16. Qf4 Bd8** Now comes a demolition sacrifice to expose the Black King. **17. Nxg7! Kxg7 18. Qxh6 + Kg8 19. Bf4 Nfg4 20. Qh5 Re6 21. Ne3 Qd7 22. Nxg4 Nxd3 23. Nh6 + Kf8 24. Nf5 Bf6 25. Bh6 + Ke8 26. Bg7! Bxg7 27. Rxe6 + 1-0.**

Problem

White to play and win. Be generous with the knights.



Solution

1. Nf1 + Not 1. Nc6? Qe7 + and 2 . . . Qxe2. **Kg1 2. Ne2 + Kxf1 3. Nf4 Qa7 +** If 3. . . .Ke1 4. Qe5 + Kd2 5. Qe2 + Kc3 6. Qb2 + Kc4 7. Qb4 mate. **4. Kb3 Qb8 + 5. Kc2 Qxf4 6. Qh1 + Ke2 7. Qd1 + Ke3 8. Qd3 mate.** A 1971 study by L. Kaiznelson.

George Botterill

QUIZ

1) Which company's bid for Imperial Tobacco was referred to the Monopolies Commission last week?
2) Which company's bid for Distillers was referred to the Monopolies Commission last week?
3) Who said last week 'It has been a very, very difficult few weeks'?
4) Who said last week, and with reference to what, 'there are no no-go areas and no no-go people as far as I am concerned'?
5) Which British politician was banned from delivering a lecture in Istanbul this week?
6) What did Geoffrey Martin and Jacobus van Dijk find last week?
7) In which country was Nazi war criminal Pieter Menten awarded £37,000 damages by a court last week?
8) Which British actress won a share of £147,233 in settlement of a court claim for unpaid royalties last week?
9) Which country is holding a referendum on 12 March about staying in NATO?
10) Which country is holding a referendum on 27 February about EEC reforms?

Answers

1) United Biscuits; 2) Guinness; 3) Margaret Thatcher; 4) Neil Kinnock, on his meeting with Bernie Grant; 5) Tony Benn; 6) The Tomb of Maya; 7) Ireland; 8) Joan Collins; 9) Spain; 10) Denmark

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